

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–13PP 681, 682

1–4PP 681

5, 7–10, 12, 13PP 682

The Second Book of SAMUEL Otherwise Called the Second Book of the Kings

[A combined introduction to 1 and 2 Samuel is given immediately preceding the comment on 1 Samuel.]

CHAPTER 1

1 *The Amalekite, who brought tidings of the overthrow, and accused himself of Saul's death, is slain. 17 David lamenteth Saul and Jonathan with a song.*

1. Now it came to pass. This statement is the natural connecting link between the events of 1 Sam. 30 and 31 and the events now to be narrated. There is no break between the two books of Samuel, the events of this chapter being a continuation of the preceding history, without any interruption.

The death of Saul. This was the decisive event that opened the way for David's succession to the throne. At the time of the fatal battle between Saul and the Philistines, David had been engaged in his attack upon the Amalekites, who had spoiled Ziklag (1 Sam. 30). Some time elapsed before he learned of Saul's death.

2. The third day. That is, the third day after David's return to Ziklag, not necessarily the third day after the death of Saul.

His clothes rent. As if to indicate sorrow for the defeat that had befallen David's people (see Joshua 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; 2 Sam. 15:32; Job 2:12).

Did obeisance. The messenger was an Amalekite (see on v. 13), of the same race as the people who had attacked the camp of David and whom David had recently smitten (1 Sam. 30:1, 17, 18). His father, however, was a sojourner in Israel, and the man was evidently enlisted in Saul's army (see on v. 3). His act of obeisance was presumably in recognition of David's new position as leader in Israel.

3. Out of the camp. The question has been raised as to whether this Amalekite had been one of the soldiers of Saul. Some have thought that the expression, "As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa" (v. 6), indicates that his presence there was merely accidental. But travelers are hardly likely to wander by chance into the heart of a battle, and the expression "by chance" is better understood as meaning that in the course of the battle he happened to come upon Saul when he was wounded.

4. How went the matter? The appearance of the young man, with his clothes rent and earth upon his head (v. 2), gave evidence that Israel had suffered a disastrous defeat. David was anxious for details.

6. As I happened. The story of the young man does not agree with the account of Saul's death found in 1 Sam. 31:3–6 (see on 1 Sam. 31:4). The Amalekite invented his tale for the purpose of securing a reward, thinking that his alleged deed would be highly acclaimed by David.

10. The crown. The Amalekite was evidently one of the first to come upon the body of Saul, inasmuch as he was able to recover the crown and bracelet. He presented these articles as positive proof that Saul was dead. The offering of these emblems of royalty to

David shows that the young man recognized David as the future king. For his pains the young man expected a rich reward.

11. *Rent them.* This act revealed the true greatness of Israel's future king. David mourned with genuine sorrow. Even though Saul had sought to take the life of his supposed rival, David entertained no malice toward him. This reaction on the part of David is not the natural response of the human heart of man but is an indication of the love and pity of God within the soul. As a true Israelite, David mourned the death of the king, and as a personal friend he mourned the loss of Jonathan, whom he regarded with deep affection.

12. *For the people.* Saul had not fallen alone. Many of the children of Israel had fallen with him. These are here designated the people of Jehovah, a part of that church of which David was also a member, and which, despite its defects, Christ earnestly loved and guarded. The loss of life among those whom David regarded as his friends and brethren filled him with the keenest sorrow.

13. *Whence art thou?* While David mourned for Saul, the Amalekite stood idly by, unable to understand the significance of the scene he was witnessing. Recovering from his first shock of grief, David turned to the young man before him, desiring further details concerning the crime of which he had already confessed himself guilty.

Stranger. Heb. *ger*, literally, "sojourner." His father was an Amalekite who "sojournd" as a resident alien in Israel.

14. *Not afraid.* David had twice had the opportunity to take the life of Saul but had refused to lift up his hand against the Lord's anointed. He regarded the act of murdering a king a base crime against the nation as well as against God. For a foreigner to slay the king whom God had appointed and who had been anointed with the holy oil of the Lord, he considered a most heinous offense, to be expiated only by death.

15. *Fall upon him.* The crime to which the Amalekite had made confession was worthy of death, and it was his own words that had condemned him. David would most probably be considered guiltless in passing sentence even though the young man had obviously not slain Saul (see on v. 6). The evidence in the case appeared beyond dispute, and justice was speedily executed in all good faith.

17. *This lamentation.* In his deep and genuine sorrow for Saul and Jonathan, David poured out his grief in a touching poem that revealed his utter sincerity and nobility of nature. In this funeral dirge David paid his final tribute to the bravery and might of Saul and expressed his deep affection for his friend Jonathan. There is no thought of bitterness, no trace of malice, no exultation at the removal of an enemy who had long frustrated his hopes for a life of peace and tranquility within his own country. Compare David's much shorter dirge on the death of Abner (ch. 3:33, 34).

18. *The use of the bow.* The words "the use of" are not in the Hebrew. Literally translated the phrase would read: "And he said to teach the children of Judah the bow." The LXX omits "the bow" and says, "And he gave orders to teach it [the lamentation] the sons of Juda." The exact meaning of the Hebrew clause is not clear. What follows seems to have nothing to do with the bow. Some think that because the poem is a martial ode it was entitled by David, "The Bow." The bow was one of the chief weapons of the time, and one with which the Benjamites were particularly skillful (1 Chron. 12:2; 2 Chron. 14:8; 17:17).

Book of Jasher. This book is referred to as early as Joshua 10:13, at the time of the victory of the Israelites under Joshua in the Valley of Aijalon. Little is known concerning it. It seems to have been a collection of songs relating to memorable events and men in the early history of Israel. David's ode on the death of Saul and Jonathan appears to have been inserted in this volume (see on Joshua 10:13).

19. The beauty. Heb. *šebi*. Literally, "beauty," or "honor." The LXX takes this Hebrew word as from the root *našab*, which means "to set up," as a pillar, and translates the clause, "Set up a pillar, O Israel, for the slain."

The mighty. See v. 25. The ode consists of two parts, the first dealing with both Saul and Jonathan (vs. 19–24), and the second dealing only with Jonathan (vs. 25, 26).

20. Gath. The royal city of Achish (1 Sam. 21:10, 12; 27:2–4), where David had himself resided. The expression "Tell it not in Gath" seems to have become a proverb (see Micah 1:10).

Askelon. One of the chief cities of the Philistines. Gath and Ashkelon are used poetically for all Philistia.

The daughters. It was customary for women to celebrate great deliverances and national triumphs (Ex. 15:21; 1 Sam. 18:6).

The uncircumcised. A term particularly suitable to the non-Semitic Philistines, and frequently so applied (see Judges 14:3; 15:18; 1 Sam. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 1 Chron. 10:4). For the practice of circumcision by peoples other than the Hebrews see on Gen. 17:11.

21. No dew. Dew and rain make possible the products of the earth. To deprive of its harvests the region where Saul and Jonathan were slain would be the greatest calamity David could invoke. For similar passionate poetical maledictions see Job 3:3–10; Jer. 20:14–18.

Fields of offerings. The meaning of this phrase is not clear. The LXX reads "fields of first-fruits." Some form of curse upon the once fertile ground of Gilboa is intended, an imprecation that the soil might be so barren that nothing would grow, not even the first fruits—the greatest calamity that could befall the land.

Vilely cast away. Heb. *niga'al* from the root *ga'al*, "to abhor," "to loathe." The word may also be translated "defiled." This latter seems to be the meaning required by the context. The statement would then refer to these shields as defiled with blood. The translation found in the KJV attributes cowardice to Saul, a sentiment inconsistent with the poem.

Anointed with oil. The words "as though he had" and "been" are not in the Hebrew, as the italics indicate. The Hebrew simply reads, "the shield of Saul not anointed with oil." It was an ancient custom to anoint the shield before going to battle (see Isa. 21:5). Instead of being anointed and ready for battle, Saul's shield lay defiled in blood.

22. Returned not empty. The successes of previous encounters contrasted with the present disastrous defeat.

23. In their lives. The Hebrew suggests a different punctuation: "Saul and Jonathan, lovely and pleasant, in their life and in their death they were not parted." The LXX reads, "Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and the beautiful, were not divided: comely in their life, and in their death they were not divided." In spite of Jonathan's friendship with David, and Saul's rash attempts at the life of his son, Jonathan had remained with his father as a

dutiful prince, and was with him fighting the battles of the realm when death overtook them both.

Swifter than eagles. See Deut. 28:49; Jer. 4:13; Lam. 4:19; Hab. 1:8.

24. Ye daughters. The women of Israel had rejoiced at the hour of triumph (1 Sam. 18:6, 7); they were now to lament the fallen heroes at the hour of defeat.

In scarlet. See Prov. 31:21. Returning from his victories, Saul shared with the people his spoils, and as a result the women of Israel enjoyed articles of luxury—scarlet, gold, and other delights.

25. How are the mighty fallen. The poet thrice repeats this refrain (see vs. 19, 27). The recurrence of the same idea is appropriate to the spirit of the elegy, since grief is fond of dwelling on the central theme of its passion, expressing itself again and again in the same bitter strains.

26. Passing the love of women. By this touching expression David showed the depth and sincerity of Jonathan's love. Jonathan suffered the loss of crown and kingdom because of his love for David.

True love consists in thinking of others, caring for others, and doing for others. Selfishness consists in requiring of others what one is unwilling to do himself. To Jonathan, the friendship of David meant more than fame and fortune.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–27PP 694–696

1 PP 694

2–16PP 695

19–27PP 696

21 Ev 170, 619; TM 413, 466; 2T 22; 5T 166, 251, 727; 6T 417; 7T 251

25, 26 ML 210

CHAPTER 2

1 *David, by God's direction, with his company goeth up to Hebron, where he is made king of Judah.* 5 *He commendeth them of Jabesh-gilead for their kindness to Saul.* 8 *Abner maketh Ish-bosheth king of Israel.* 12 *A mortal skirmish between twelve of Abner's and twelve of Joab's men.* 18 *Asahel is slain.* 25 *At Abner's motion Joab soundeth a retreat.* 32 *Asahel's burial.*

1. Enquired of the Lord. David had learned by bitter experience the folly of making important decisions without divine counsel (see 1 Sam. 27 to 30). At this important juncture his first concern was to know what God would have him do. His inquiry was probably made through Abiathar the priest (see 1 Sam. 23:6, 9–12; 30:6–8).

Shall I go up? For some time David had been an exile from his own country, but the death of Saul had opened the way for his return to his own land. Every consideration seemed to indicate that the time had come for a return, but before going back David sought to know the will of the Lord.

Unto Hebron. The ancient home of Abraham (Gen. 13:18), and the burial place of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob. It lay 24 3/4 mi. (39.6 km.) northeast of Beersheba, probably 17 1/8 mi. (27.4 km.) from Ziklag, in a beautiful valley surrounded by fertile hills and fruitful lands. The region had long been famous for its vineyards, its grapes being regarded as the finest in Palestine. David had maintained friendly relations with this city during the lifetime of Saul. It was well suited for the temporary capital of David's southern kingdom, not only being situated in a strong position in the mountains

of Judah, amid people who were friendly to David, but having the sacred associations of the early patriarchs. The city became the home of David for the next seven years.

2. *His two wives.* See 1 Sam. 25:42, 43.

3. *His men.* The 600 who had gone with David to Achish (1 Sam. 27:2, 3). Many of them were married, and they came with their families and possessions, including their flocks and herds.

Cities of Hebron. Hebron had evidently given its name to the district in which the city was located, as Samaria was the term used for the country around the city of Samaria.

4. *They anointed David.* David had already been anointed privately by Samuel (1 Sam. 16:13). This gave him the evidence that his appointment was of God. He was now publicly anointed in recognition of his acceptance by the tribe of Judah. Saul too was first privately anointed by Samuel and later publicly proclaimed king (1 Sam. 10:1, 24; 11:14, 15). David's countrymen in Judah had long recognized that David had been divinely selected for their future king and to a large extent had been on friendly terms with him during the long period when he was an outlaw and a fugitive from Saul. In recognition of their kindness David had sent presents to them (1 Sam. 30:26–31), thus maintaining the bond of friendship and attachment. Later David was anointed a third time, as king over all the tribes (2 Sam. 5:3).

Jabesh-gilead. A town about 2 2/3 mi. (4.3 km.) east of Jordan, about 21 1/2 mi. (34.4 km.) from the Sea of Galilee. For more on this site see on 1 Sam. 11:1. Saul had come to the rescue of Jabesh-gilead when Nahash the Ammonite encamped against it, putting the Ammonites to flight (1 Sam. 11:1–11). It was evidently for this kindness that the men of Jabesh-gilead had rescued the body of Saul from the wall of Beth-shan and had given it an honorable burial (1 Sam. 31:11–13; 1 Chron. 10:11, 12).

5. *Sent messengers.* The conduct of David toward Jabesh-gilead was no doubt prompted by kindness and sincerity. It was also a wise policy. The men of Jabesh-gilead had shown themselves kind to the former king of Israel, and for this they were commended by the new king. David did not harbor a grudge toward the memory of Saul even though he had suffered severely at Saul's hand. By recognizing the kindness and valor of those who had given their allegiance to Saul, David won the allegiance of these men to himself.

6. *Requite you.* David pledged that he would be the friend and protector of the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead even as Saul had been before him. Since the city was vulnerable to attack from the eastern desert, the time might come when the people would need the help of the new king. David wanted them to know that he held nothing against them because of their loyalty to Saul, and that they could count upon him even as they had counted on Saul.

7. *Be ye valiant.* An invitation from David for the men of Jabesh-gilead to show themselves as faithful and valiant to him as they had shown themselves faithful to Israel's former king.

8. *The son of Ner.* See on 1 Sam. 14:50.

Captain of Saul's host. When Saul became king he made his uncle Abner commander in chief of his army (1 Sam. 14:50). Abner was thus, by the ties of blood and of office, strongly attached to the house of Saul. He had been with Saul in the pursuit of David, and was not now willing that the man he had so long hunted should succeed to the

kingdom over which Saul had reigned. Abner never forgot the rebuke David gave him for sleeping on guard (1 Sam. 26:7–16). He was proud, vengeful, and ambitious, determined to have his own way rather than to allow David to rule as the anointed of the Lord.

Ish-bosheth. The youngest of Saul's four sons. The other sons were slain with Saul at the battle of Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:2). His name (shortened to Ishui in 1 Sam. 14:49) was probably originally Esh-baal (1 Chron. 8:33; 9:39), meaning "man of Baal," for no king would name his son "Ish-bosheth," meaning "man of shame."

Mahanaim. Literally, "two camps." This town was on the east side of the Jordan, but its site has not been identified. One of two suggested sites is east of Jabesh-gilead. Jacob gave the name to the place when the angels of God met him after he had parted from Laban and before he crossed the Jabbok (Gen. 32:1, 2). It was a Levitical city (Joshua 21:38). Located in the eastern section of the country, it was in comparative safety from the attacks of the Philistines and of the forces of David should David choose to suppress his rival. When David later fled from Absalom he made Mahanaim his place of refuge (2 Sam. 17:24). The city is mentioned in Shishak's victory inscription as *Mḥnm*, in the Egyptian vowelless hieroglyphic script (see on 1 Kings 14:25).

9. Made him king. The coronation of Ish-bosheth as king over Israel was due to the determined purpose of Abner. Long associated with Saul, Abner had come to hate the man whom God had chosen as king. He was unprincipled, a man who was devoted to his own low, selfish interests rather than the interests of the people or the will of the Lord. He would rather bring about a division of the kingdom and distress upon the nation than accept David as king.

Over Gilead. The description of the territory over which Ish-bosheth ruled begins with the region surrounding the capital, Mahanaim, and then extends to the more distant areas. With the exception of Gilead all the sites are on the west of the Jordan, with Benjamin in the south in the area north of Jerusalem.

Ashurites. It is not clear what people are meant. The reference may be to members of the tribe of Asher (see Judges 1:32). The LXX has "Thasiri" and the Vulgate and the Syriac "Geshur." Ish-bosheth was accepted first in Gilead and later extended his rule "over all Israel."

10. Two years. Ish-bosheth began his reign in the same year as David, and reigned two years at Mahanaim. This does not mean that the total length of Ish-bosheth's reign was two years, but that after two years the events about to be described, Abner's war with David (vs. 12–32), the long war between the house of Saul and the house of David (ch. 3:1), and Abner's revolt to David (ch. 3:6–39), took place (see PP 699).

11. Seven years and six months. This statement seems to be parenthetically introduced to give the total length of David's reign at Hebron. Since the length of Ish-bosheth's reign is not known (see on v. 10), we do not know the interval between Ish-bosheth's death and the time that David was anointed king "over Israel" (ch. 5:3).

12. Went out. That is, for the purpose of war (see 1 Sam. 18:30; 2 Sam. 21:17; 1 Chron. 20:1).

To Gibeon. Desirous of extending his power over all Israel, Abner ventured to the borders of David's domain. Gibeon was in the territory of Benjamin, 5 3/4 mi. (9.2 km.) northwest of Jerusalem. The site is now known as *ej-Jib*.

13. Zeruiah. Zeruiah was the sister of David (1 Chron. 2:16), and Joab was therefore the nephew of David. He later became the commander in chief of David's armies (1 Chron. 11:6; cf. 2 Sam. 5:8).

The pool of Gibeon. To the southeast of the hill of Gibeon is a copious spring that issues into a reservoir excavated in the limestone rock. Below, a large open reservoir, the ruins of which still remain, stored the overflow from this subterranean spring. The forces of Joab and Abner sat in full sight of each other, on opposite sides of the pool.

14. Play. Abner challenged Joab to a test of strength to be decided by a combat between an equal number of champions to be selected from each side. Such contests preceding a battle were not uncommon in ancient times.

16. Helkath-hazzurim. A commemorative name that means "field of flints" or "field of [sword] edges." The LXX renders this, "the portion of the treacherous ones."

17. A very sore battle. The numbers engaged were probably not large, since the total of those slain was only 20 on the side of David and 360 on the side of Israel (vs. 30, 31), but the contest was fought out with a fierceness that brought a decisive victory to the forces of Judah.

19. Asahel pursued. Abner was the backbone of the resistance against David. If he could be put out of the contest, the cause of Ish-bosheth would collapse, and the entire kingdom would quickly be united under David. Understanding this, Asahel persistently kept on the heels of Israel's commander in chief.

21. Turn thee aside. Recognizing that the foe who was pursuing him was the brother of Joab, Abner was unwilling to injure him and urged that he turn aside and content himself with some meaner antagonist. Though light of foot (v. 18), Asahel was no match for a probably more robust and seasoned warrior.

22. Hold up my face. Abner made a second attempt to dissuade Asahel from his pursuit, making it clear that he feared the blood feud that must inevitably follow if he were to slay the brother of David's doughty commander in chief.

23. Under the fifth rib. This expression (see ch. 3:27; 4:6; 20:10) simply means "abdomen," and should be so translated.

24. The hill of Ammah. Neither this place nor Giah has been identified.

25. Gathered themselves. It appears that Abner's forces had become widely scattered, but the Benjamites had kept together and now joined Abner in a strong position upon a hilltop.

26. Devour for ever. The forces of Abner had lost heavily in the struggle, but in their present hilltop position they would have been able to inflict heavy losses upon the troops of Joab if the latter had persisted in the attack. Knowing that he was in no position to win, and knowing also that Joab would be aware of the heavy price he would have to pay if he was determined to rout him from his strong defensive position, Abner now made an appeal to the opposing forces to stop pursuing their fellow Hebrews. Abner had laid down a challenge to war, and he now set forth an appeal for peace. In this appeal Abner was motivated largely by his own defeat and present danger, and not by a sincere desire to terminate the struggle with the house of David. His conciliatory proposal was dictated by a change in circumstances, not by a change of heart.

27. Unless thou hadst spoken. The exact meaning of these words of Joab is not clear. Several interpretations have been offered: (1) Joab is referring back to the events of the morning, placing the blame for the struggle upon Abner and insisting that the people on

both sides were ready that morning to go to their homes without a battle had not Abner issued his challenge to war. (2) Joab was endeavoring to make it clear to Abner that had he not asked for peace the people would have continued the struggle till the morning, with all that that implied of still further disastrous results for Abner. (3) Even if Abner had not spoken, Joab had intended continuing the struggle only till the morning, but in view of Abner's present request he was willing to call off the battle at this juncture. On the whole, it seems that Joab was endeavoring to place the blame upon Abner, whose rash challenge at Gibeon had brought on the struggle that day between brother and brother. To engage in civil war was most unfortunate, and Joab sought to clear himself of responsibility for what had occurred.

28. Any more. Heb. 'od, literally, "still," "yet," "again." The word expresses continuance but not necessarily endless duration. Here the duration is definitely limited, for "there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David" (ch. 3:1). The words "any more" simply mark the termination of this particular war.

29. Walked all that night. Abner did not intend to run the risk of continuing the struggle the next morning, but made an immediate withdrawal.

Through the plain. Literally, "through the Arabah." The Arabah is a term applied to the depression of the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea and to the depression extending south of the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqabah.

Bithron. From the root *bathar*, "to cut in two." Hence probably a ravine in the sense of a region being cut up with mountains and valley. Bithron has generally been understood as an unknown valley or district leading to Mahanaim. Some apply the idea of "to cut in two" to a day and make Abner and his men continue their all-night retreat by marching in addition "the whole forenoon," that is, half of the following day (see RSV).

30. Nineteen men. These were probably in addition to the 12 men who died that morning at Gibeon (vs. 15, 16).

31. Three hundred and threescore. This great disparity between the losses among the men of Judah and those of Israel may have been due to the fact that David's men were seasoned veterans who had been with him in his long period of flight from Saul (see 1 Sam. 23:13; 27:2; 30:9), while Abner's men were probably remnants of Saul's defeated army.

32. Took up Asahel. The bodies of the other soldiers who were slain were probably buried where they fell, but because of Asahel's relationship to both David and Joab his body was taken to Bethlehem, where it was given burial in the family tomb.

At break of day. Hebron was 14 mi. (22.4 km.) south-southwest of Bethlehem and 23 mi. (36.8 km.) from Gibeon. It would have been a remarkable feat for David's men, after their long pursuit of the forces of Abner, to leave the scene of battle after nightfall (v. 24), secure the body of Asahel, take it to Bethlehem, bury it in the family tomb, and then continue their march to reach Hebron by daybreak. However, the narrative does not make clear whether the overnight march was from the battlefield or from Bethlehem. Perhaps it was from the latter, inasmuch as some time would be involved in the burial of Asahel.

It is sometimes difficult to understand the motives that prompt a man to take a certain course of action that seems, in retrospect, to have been ill-advised. One cannot help but wish that better judgment had prevailed.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–24PP 697–699

1–4PP 697

5–9PP 698

8, 10, 22, 23 PP 699

CHAPTER 3

1 *During the war David still waxeth stronger.* 2 *Six sons were born to him in Hebron.* 6 *Abner, displeased with Ish-bosheth, 12 revolteth to David.* 13 *David requireth a condition to bring him his wife Michal.* 17 *Abner, having communed with the Israelites, is feasted by David, and dismissed.* 22 *Joab, returning from battle, is displeased with the king, and killeth Abner.* 28 *David curseth Joab, 31 and mourneth for Abner.*

1. There was long war. There was not open warfare but a state of hostility between the houses of Saul and David. This situation must have continued about five years, for Ish-bosheth reigned two years at Mahanaim before war began (ch. 2:10) and David reigned seven years and six months at Hebron before he became king over “all Israel” (ch. 5:5). During this time David was content largely to allow matters to take their own course. Instead of taking the offensive against Israel, David awaited the outcome of events, confident of the early fulfillment of God’s promises to him concerning the kingdom.

David waxed stronger. Time was on David’s side. Ish-bosheth was a weakling, and a few years of incompetent rule, followed by a few more without a king, made Israel long for the type of aggressive leadership that David provided for Judah. David was a man of character and prowess, and his daring and courage had endeared him to the hearts of the people. As the years went by it became increasingly evident that he was the man whom the Lord had ordained for the kingdom. Even on the occasion of Saul’s last battle there had been a significant defection to David from the tribe of Manasseh, with men continuing to come to his side “day by day” (1 Chron. 12:19–22).

2. Sons born. Though God suffered the practice of polygamy for a time (see on Deut. 14:26), He did not prevent the evil results of such a mode of life. Strife, contention, variance, jealousy, and bitterness came to David’s household and left their evil effects upon the people of the realm. Three of the sons born to David at Hebron brought much vexation and woe to him, to his family, and to the nation.

Amnon. Literally, “faithful.” See ch. 13 for the record of the unhappy experience of David with this son.

3. Chileab. Called “Daniel” in 1 Chron. 3:1. Nothing further is known of him. It is possible that he died at an early age.

Absalom. The sad history of this son, his rebellion, and death are recorded in chs. 13 to 18.

Geshur. An area below Mt. Hermon east and north of the Sea of Galilee (Deut. 3:14; Joshua 12:5; 13:11, 13; 1 Chron. 2:23). However, there were Geshurites mentioned as living in a district in the Negeb on the south of Judah invaded by David during his residence in Ziklag (1 Sam. 27:8). The statement in 2 Sam. 15:8 seems to identify the Geshur from which Maacah came as a Syrian region.

4. Adonijah. Literally, “Yahweh is my Lord.” This is the son who, when David was old, aspired to the crown (1 Kings 1:5), and was later put to death by Solomon (1 Kings 2:24, 25). After the death of his three elder brothers, Chileab being presumably dead, Adonijah regarded himself the rightful heir to the throne.

Shephatiah. Literally, “Yahweh has judged.” Nothing is known concerning this son.

5. Ithream, by Eglah. Nothing is known of this son or his mother.

David’s wife. According to the Jewish interpretation this title is taken to mean that Eglah was first in rank among David’s wives. Others see in the expression a description applying to all the precedingly listed women.

6. Made himself strong. Abner kept on assuming an increasingly important role in the affairs of the house of Saul. He was the mainstay of Saul’s tottering dynasty, and well realized his own importance. Except for the strength of Abner, Ish-bosheth would never have been able to maintain his hold upon Israel’s throne.

7. Rizpah. See ch. 21:8–11.

Wherefore? In Oriental lands the harem of a king was regarded as the property of his successor, and the taking of a woman who had belonged to the previous king was therefore regarded as an assertion of a claim to the throne (see 2 Sam. 12:8; 16:21; 1 Kings 2:22). There is nothing in the record to indicate that Abner, if guilty of the act of which he was charged, had any design on Ish-bosheth’s throne, but the king nevertheless preferred to regard the alleged conduct as an act of treachery, and it was this that aroused the anger of Abner. Ish-bosheth’s words of reproach are understandable, for Abner’s alleged deed violated the rights of the king.

8. Very wroth. Abner was angry because the one who owed his throne solely to his support now dared to reproach and upbraid him.

Dog’s head. The first part of Abner’s reply reads literally, “Am I a dog’s head which belongs to Judah?” The LXX omits the expression “which belongs to Judah.” Abner’s words were not an attempt to justify himself, but rather an expression of his resentment of Ish-bosheth’s rebuke. Ish-bosheth had probably employed some term of reproach against Abner, and Abner now responded by asking whether after all he was such a vile and worthless creature—he who had taken so strong a position against Judah and had continued to show such great kindness to the house of Saul.

9. So do God to Abner. These words are in the form of a solemn oath (see Ruth 1:17; 1 Sam. 3:17; 25:22; 2 Sam. 19:13; 1 Kings 19:2; 2 Kings 6:31). Abner swears that he will transfer the kingdom to David, and invokes the wrath of God upon himself if he does not fulfill his word.

As the Lord hath sworn. This statement shows how generally it was known that the Lord had chosen David to succeed Saul. There is no record of an oath on the part of God to deliver the kingdom to David, but Abner evidently understood the promise as solemnly sworn. Perhaps there is an allusion to the words “will not lie nor repent” as regards the promise God made through Samuel to rend the kingdom from Saul and to give it to David (1 Sam. 15:28, 29).

10. Translate the kingdom. Abner’s resolve to transfer the kingdom of Saul to David was probably not the result of hasty judgment. The commander may long have pondered the advisability of giving up the attempt to maintain the tottering house of Saul. The rebuke of Ish-bosheth seemed to provide the opportunity to carry into execution a decision that he had previously arrived at.

From Dan even to Beer-sheba. This expression betokens the entire realm of Israel, from its northern to its southern limits. The phrase was used during the period of the judges and up to the time of Solomon (Judges 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25; 1 Chron. 21:2), but was employed only once after the division of the

monarchy, when Hezekiah sent an invitation to all Israel “from Beer-sheba even to Dan” (2 Chron. 30:5), to unite in the celebration of the Passover.

11. Feared him. This verse points out clearly the real nature of Ish-bosheth’s government. The weak king was afraid to make a reply to the man he knew to be the real power behind the throne.

12. On his behalf. Literally, “where he was.” The Lucian edition of the LXX reads “to Hebron.”

Whose is the land? Abner recognized that he was in a position to bargain with David. He would bring about the transfer of the land on one condition, that David make a league with him, giving him definite assurance of proper consideration for himself. In this proposal the narrow, haughty, self-seeking spirit of Abner was clearly revealed. He would throw in his lot with David, but only at a price, and he wanted first to make certain that the price would be paid.

13. Bring Michal. Michal had been given to David by Saul (1 Sam. 18:20, 21, 27) and was rightfully his. But besides the question of the justice of David’s demand was the politic consideration of the effect on Saul’s partisans of having a daughter of Saul as queen of Judah. This would tend to show that David had no malice against the house of Saul, and David’s right to the kingdom would be further enhanced by his being the son-in-law of the previous king.

14. To Ish-bosheth. The messengers were sent to Ish-bosheth and not to Abner, probably because the negotiations between Abner and David were then still secret. On the other hand it was Ish-bosheth who as king would have to issue the orders for Michal’s return. Without the support of Abner, Ish-bosheth would be in no position to resist David’s demand. In complying with that demand, Ish-bosheth would reveal his own weakness, acknowledge the wrong that had been done to David, and the justice of David’s demand. For Ish-bosheth publicly to accede to this demand would give evidence to all in both Judah and Israel that his days were numbered and that David would soon take over the entire kingdom.

An hundred foreskins. Saul had demanded 100 foreskins but 200 had been delivered (1 Sam. 18:25, 27).

15. Phaltiel. Or “Phalti,” whose home was in Gallim (1 Sam. 25:44), which, according to Isa. 10:29, 30, seems to have been not far from Gibeah and Anathoth. But he had probably taken up his residence across the Jordan in the region of Mahanaim with the adherents of Saul.

16. Weeping behind her. The sentence may be rendered more smoothly, “And her husband went with her, weeping as he walked behind her.” Though sympathy may be evoked by this touching tale it should be borne in mind that Phaltiel had erred in taking another man’s wife to himself.

Bahurim. Thought to be *Râs et-Ṭmîm*, east of Mt. Scopus, just northeast of Jerusalem.

Then said Abner. These words indicate that the negotiations for the return of Michal were in the hands of Abner. This being a matter of such vital importance, Abner evidently took personal charge.

17. Ye sought for David. These words suggest that there may have been a popular movement, after the death of Saul at Gilboa, to have David established as king over all Israel. At the time Abner was opposed to such a demand. Now, with his change in policy,

he prudently reminded the elders that what he was recommending was really their suggestion. It was essential for Abner to secure the consent and cooperation of these prominent officials in the impending moves.

18. *The Lord hath spoken.* This statement is undoubtedly true, but no exact words to this effect have come down to us in the Biblical record. The pronouncement was probably made through one of the prophets, Samuel, Gad, or Nathan, but only a very small percentage of the words of the prophets have been preserved.

19. *Of Benjamin.* Saul was of the tribe of Benjamin. Particular care would be necessary in the negotiations with the adherents of that tribe. They felt bound to Saul by ties of kinship and had enjoyed great advantages by virtue of their connection with him. Abner went in person to carry on his negotiations with Benjamin as he did also with David at Hebron.

21. *He went in peace.* The terms having been agreed upon the league solemnly ratified, Abner returned ready to carry out his part of the compact.

22. *Pursuing a troop.* Heb. *gedud*, which generally means “a marauding band,” “a troop,” but here seems to be used in the sense of “a foray,” or “a raid.” The sentence should read, “Joab came from a foray.” The raid had probably been against the Amalekites, the Philistines, or some other enemy of Judah. It is possible that the expedition had been planned by David, so that Joab would not be present during Abner’s visit. Joab returned, elated with his victory and the great spoil.

Not with David. The introduction of this item immediately after the mention of Joab’s return, suggests that the departure of Abner before Joab’s return was more than a mere coincidence. For the two rival generals to meet face to face at that juncture might have ruined all prospects of peace.

24. *What hast thou done?* Joab bitterly remonstrated with David for having secretly negotiated with Abner. Joab may have had an honest suspicion of Abner’s integrity, but in addition there existed a feeling of personal enmity, due partly to the fact that in the famous old warrior Joab would find a formidable rival, and partly to the blood feud between him and Abner for the slaying of Asahel (2 Sam. 2:22, 23).

26. *Sent messengers.* Without the knowledge but probably in the name of David.

Well of Sirah. Or “cistern of Sirah.” The location of this well is not positively known. Some have identified it with ‘*Ain Sārah*, about 1 1/2 mi. (2.4 km.) north of Hebron. The site seems somewhat unlikely, for in such a case Abner would have just left Hebron when Joab arrived. Others have identified it with *Şîret el-Bella’*, a mountaintop 2.7 mi. (4.3 km.) north of Hebron, where the ruins of a tower are to be seen.

27. *In the gate.* A city gate in Oriental lands is a common meeting place. To carry out his purpose it was necessary for Joab to meet Abner before Abner reached David.

For the blood of Asahel. Joab slew Abner for blood revenge. He may have justified his retaliation by the provision of Num. 35:26, 27. Interestingly enough, Hebron was a city of refuge (Joshua 20:7) and in view of that fact, Joab may have carried out his deed in the city gate. The death of Asahel, however, took place in battle, and the slaying was an unwilling and reluctant act of self-defense on the part of Abner. Joab may not have been familiar with these details. But he should have studied the far-reaching effect of his deed, delaying as it did the formation of a united kingdom for some time. So great was Abner’s confidence in David that he appears to have had no suspicions.

28. *Guiltless.* David had the reputation of being a man of his word, but the murder of Abner placed his good name in jeopardy. He did everything possible to absolve himself of any blame in the matter.

29. *Let it rest.* Literally, “let it whirl [or, whirl about].” David here invokes a curse on Joab for his mean act of seeking personal revenge. The imprecation reveals David’s keen sense of justice and his bitter indignation against an individual guilty of so dastardly a deed. David had evidently given his word that the person of Abner would be inviolate. The action of Joab cast suspicion on David’s integrity. David wanted all to know that he had had no part in this perfidious deed and that he abhorred with all his soul such a violation of honor.

Father’s house. Abishai, Joab’s brother, had also taken part in the plot to assassinate Abner (v. 30); hence, he too was included in the curse. The imprecation went beyond these two men, to include their posterity. Ancient civil penalties often seem to involve more than those directly connected with the crime. The penalty for Achan’s sin fell upon his whole family (Joshua 7:22–26). Likewise in the judgment upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, not only they perished, but their wives and the children of Dathan and Abiram (Num. 16:27–33; see also 2 Kings 5:27). At times the children may have been involved in the crime of their parents (see on Joshua 7:15). At other times innocent children suffered for the obstinacy of their elders (see on Num. 16:27). In the present instance we do not know whether the curse pronounced by David was spoken under inspiration and hence whether it had any validity or any purpose beyond expressing David’s extreme vexation at the deed.

An issue. See Lev. 15:2.

Leaneth on a staff. Some translate, “a distaff holder,” and thus indicate an effeminate person fit only to do a woman’s work.

On the sword. Literally, “by a sword.”

30. *Joab and Abishai.* Though nothing is said of Abishai’s part in the plot, this statement implies that Abishai was a willing accomplice with his brother Joab in the slaying of Abner, and thus he too must share his responsibility for the crime committed. The whole act was obviously premeditated.

31. *Gird you with sackcloth.* Joab was required publicly to condemn his own deed by his part in the public mourning. David himself followed the bier as the chief mourner, and evidently dressed in royal attire, for he is here specifically called “king David.”

32. *In Hebron.* This was another token of honor and respect, since Hebron was the capital of Judah. Abner’s home in Benjamin would have been the natural burial place, but to be buried in the royal city of Hebron would be more honorable. By ordering the burial of Abner at his capital David would help to convince the nation that he harbored no ill feelings against the slain general and that he chose to honor his memory.

33. *The king lamented.* In a brief but touching and eloquent elegy David expressed his grief and paid a worthy tribute to a fallen foe.

34. *Before wicked men.* David’s elegy to Abner was a cutting rebuke to the murderers of Israel’s commander in chief. He publicly expressed his contempt and scorn for men who would perform so foul a deed. His magnanimous recognition of the merits of one who only a short time before had been his bitter enemy won the hearts of all Israel (see PP 700). The people knew that with a man like David on the throne the kingdom

would be in the hands of a man with a conscience as well as courage, and with a heart as well as a sword.

35. *Till the sun be down.* To fast till evening was a sign of deep mourning (ch. 1:12). Before the day was over David was urged by the people to break his fast and to partake of food, but he positively declined. His refusal made a deep and favorable impression upon the people.

38. *A prince.* In some respects Abner was a man of outstanding ability and would be regarded as a great man in Israel. Yet though sincere in his pact with David, he had been moved by selfish motives. In going over to David he thought to forsake a cause that was doomed and to win new honor and glory to himself. He would have wanted the highest position in the service of David, but his ambition, selfishness, and lack of consecration to God would not have served the best interests of David's kingdom or the cause of the Lord. Abner's death was to the kingdom of Judah a blessing in disguise (see PP 700).

39. *I am this day weak.* The strength and influence of Joab was the weakness of David. If he could have done so, David would immediately have punished Joab, but for the present that was not possible. He dared not attempt justice now lest Joab's great power and popularity with the army cause a general uprising. David's hands were tied, and to his closest friends he frankly confessed his weakness.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–39PP 699, 700

1, 12, 13, 21. 27–30PP 699

31–39PP 700

CHAPTER 4

1 *The Israelites being troubled at the death of Abner, 2 Baanah and Rechab slay. Ish-bosheth, and bring his head to Hebron. 9 David causeth them to be slain, and Ish-bosheth's head to be buried.*

1. *His hands were feeble.* When Abner died the strength of Ish-bosheth was gone, and the king knew that his cause was doomed. The men of Israel were troubled, because Abner had been the strong hand at the helm. They knew that it was now probably only a question of time before Ish-bosheth would be eliminated and David would take over the kingdom.

2. *Bands.* Heb. *gedudim*, “marauding bands” (see on ch. 3:22).

A Beerothite. Beeroth was a Gibeonite city (Joshua 9:17) allocated to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:25). It is generally sought in the neighborhood of *el-Bīreh*, about 10 mi. (16 km.) to the north of Jerusalem.

3. *Gittaim.* Literally, “two Gaths,” or “two wine presses.” The exact site of Gittaim is not known. The city was inhabited by Benjamites after the return from Babylonian exile (Neh. 11:33). The time when the Beerothites fled might have been on the occasion Saul made his cruel attack upon the Gibeonites (2 Sam. 21:1, 2). If that were the case, then Gittaim was probably somewhere outside the domain of Saul.

4. *A son that was lame.* There seems to be a break here in the narrative. The reason for the introduction of this incident regarding the son of Jonathan is to show that the line of Saul at this time became practically extinct with the death of Ish-bosheth. Jonathan's son seems to have been the only other candidate for the throne.

5. *At noon.* He was taking his noonday rest. This is a regular custom in many Oriental lands.

6. *Fetch wheat.* This part of the narrative is rendered variously in the versions. The LXX reads, “And, behold, the porter [feminine] of the house winnowed wheat, and she slumbered and slept.” The Vulgate also lays the blame on the woman who kept the door. The Syriac says nothing about wheat.

7. *Took his head.* Their purpose was to take the head to David as evidence that Ish-bosheth was certainly dead. Since it was noon when Ish-bosheth was slain (v. 5), the assassins must have carried his head away in daylight. The head may have been placed in one of the wheat sacks, if such they were carrying (see v. 6).

Through the plain. That is, through the Arabah, or valley of the Jordan.

8. *Which sought thy life.* These captains had probably played an active part with the army of Saul in seeking David’s life, and they may have felt that there was within his heart a similar spirit of enmity and hatred toward Saul and his house as there had been on the part of Saul toward David. Hate usually begets hate, and bitterness on the part of one is often met by bitterness on the part of another.

The Lord hath avenged. The honor of God and the vindication of the divine cause was not the motive that prompted these assassins. They slew Ish-bosheth because they sought their own interests, not the good of David, and their words were calculated to awaken in him a spirit of gratitude toward themselves, that they might receive a handsome reward. The men were guilty of a crime that merited punishment, not reward.

9. *Redeemed my soul.* David had become well acquainted with God and His ways of justice and right. Repeatedly the Lord had intervened to spare the life of David and to bring distress upon his enemies. David was willing to leave vengeance with the Lord (Deut. 32:35; cf. Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30). He did not need the crimes of men to help him out of his troubles.

10. *And slew him.* The clause thus introduced may be translated, “And I slew him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave to him for his tidings” (see RSV; cf. ch. 1:2–16).

11. *A righteous person.* This statement is not intended to be a complete evaluation of Ish-bosheth’s moral character but simply a pronouncement clearing the character of the king from crime worthy of death.

Require his blood. David was addressing a question to the murderers. He had presented the facts before them exactly as they were, and they themselves were to judge whether his decision was right or wrong. There could be only one answer, even from the condemned—they were guilty and were worthy to die. Justice demanded that the sentence of death be executed, and the accused had nothing to say in self-defense.

Many men placed in David’s position would not have thought as clearly or judged as wisely as did David. They might have considered these murderers as true patriots, worthy citizens, and friends. What actually was murder they might have interpreted as a deed of justice and necessity, performed in the best interests of the state. The murderers themselves hoped and certainly expected to have their deed interpreted in that way. But David saw beneath the outward sham, ascertaining correctly their selfish, evil motives. They did not hesitate at murder if it would serve their personal interests. They pretended to be friends of David, but in being traitors to the man they served, they proved themselves to be unworthy citizens of the nation of Israel. Let some turn of events place David in an unfavorable situation, and they would not hesitate to slay him exactly as they

had slain Ish-bosheth. Such men could not be trusted. They were not worthy to live, and by their silence they proclaimed to the nation that they regarded the sentence against them as just.

Take you away. Literally, “consume you” or “destroy you.” The Hebrew word, *ba‘ar*, here translated “take away,” in the form here employed is used of putting away evil or the guilt of evil (Deut. 19:13, 19; etc.). The murderers’ guilt polluted the land and could be expiated only by the blood of those guilty of shedding innocent blood (Num. 35:33).

12. Over the pool. A public place, where the bodies would be seen by all. The mutilation of the bodies added further disgrace to the criminals, and the hanging up of the corpses at the public pool gave maximum publicity to the event. Such a treatment would serve as a terrible warning to all that such crimes would not be condoned.

The head of Ish-bosheth. As an individual Ish-bosheth had shown himself guilty of no dishonor, and there was no reason why he should not be accorded an honorable burial.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–12PP 700, 701

1 PP 700

4 PP 713

5–12PP 701

CHAPTER 5

1 *The tribes come to Hebron to anoint David over Israel.* 4 *David’s age.* 6 *He taking Zion from the Jebusites dwelleth in it.* 11 *Hiram sendeth to David.* 13 *Eleven sons are born to him in Jerusalem.* 17 *David, directed by God, smiteth the Philistines at Baa-lperazim,* 22 *and again at the mulberry trees.*

1. All the tribes. Chapters 5 to 10 deal with the establishment of the kingdom and the early part of David’s reign over the whole nation. Chronicles adds certain interesting details of the manner in which various tribes from both sides of the Jordan came to Hebron to make David king, and of the joyous festivities on that occasion. Not only did the elders come as representatives of the people (ch. 5:3) but numerous bands of armed men participated (1 Chron. 12:23–38), and 4,600 Levites, with Jehoiada as the leader of the Aaronites and Zadok as a “young man mighty of valour” (1 Chron. 12:26–28).

The events in Samuel are not arranged with a strict regard to chronology. The writer of this book describes first the internal development of the kingdom, and then the external development of the realm.

Thy bone and thy flesh. More than perhaps any other people on earth, the Hebrews were bound together by ties of kinship. They were all children of Abraham, all of the same bone and flesh as was David himself (see Gen. 29:14; Judges 9:2; 2 Sam. 19:12). The same tie still binds the Jews of all lands.

2. That leddest out. See 1 Sam. 18:16. The people were not selecting their new leader blindly. Even while Saul was king the outstanding ability of David as a leader had manifested itself. The people had confidence in his prowess and sagacity.

The Lord said to thee. The main reason David should be king was that the Lord had chosen him for that position. Why the elders mentioned this point last is not revealed. With such a general confidence in the valiant and virtuous son of Jesse, with the house of Saul having practically come to an end, and with the divine will having so clearly manifested itself in behalf of David, it was obviously to the best interests of the people to unite under his leadership.

Thou shalt feed. Literally, “thou shalt pasture,” from the Heb. *ra’ah*, “to pasture.” The participle of this verb is translated “shepherd” in the OT (see Num. 27:17; Ps. 23:1; etc.). David was to be a shepherd over Israel, a significant figure for one who through experience was acquainted with the multiplied and comprehensive duties of such a vocation. The word “pastor” in the KJV (Jer. 2:8; 3:15; etc.) is a translation of this same Hebrew word. The single occurrence of “pastor” in the NT (Eph. 4:11) is the translation of the Greek word for “shepherd.”

Captain. Literally, “ruler,” “prince.”

3. *All the elders.* The elders acted as the representatives and spokesmen of the people. With them came many of the warriors and the priests to acknowledge their allegiance to the son of Jesse (1 Chron. 12:23–38). Many thousands thronged to Hebron for the coronation ceremonies.

Made a league. The details of the agreement are not given, but there was evidently some understanding as to the prerogatives of the king and the rights of the subjects. There may have been reference to such matters as leadership in war, freedom from tribal partiality, political asylum for the remnant of the house of Saul, the size of the national army, and the manner of securing recruits, etc.

Over Israel. David had previously been anointed king over Judah (ch. 2:4).

4. *Thirty years old.* For the relationship between the ages of David and Saul see p. 132. Since David reigned 40 years, he was 70 years old at his death, described as “a good old age” (1 Chron. 29:28), probably from the point of view of one who had lived a strenuous life.

6. *Went to Jerusalem.* As soon as David was anointed king over all Israel, he saw the need of a better site than Hebron for his capital. Hebron was in the extreme south of the territory occupied by the Hebrews. He evidently preferred to retain his capital in Judah, and Jerusalem offered an ideal site (see on Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21). Joshua had slain and defeated the king of Jerusalem (Joshua 10:23–26; 12:10), and later the city had been taken and destroyed by Judah (see on Judges 1:7). But the Jebusites, who occupied Jerusalem, were not completely conquered, and either continued to hold at least a part of the city or retook it after being driven out (Joshua 15:63; Judges 1:21; 19:11, 12). The dislodging of the Jebusites from this important stronghold was an important victory for David at the beginning of his reign over all Israel.

Take away the blind. This statement has puzzled commentators, and many interpretations of the passage have been given. The one that offers perhaps the most reasonable explanation has the Jebusites saying, “You will not enter the city, but the blind and the lame will keep you out.” That is, the inhabitants of Jebus had confidence in the strength of their city, and were taunting David about his inability to take their fortress, telling him that the blind and the lame would be sufficient to hold the city against the forces of Israel.

The Jebusite stronghold was on Mt. Zion, south of Mt. Moriah, the elevation on which the Temple was later built. The mountain was flanked on two sides by deep valleys, and was admirably suited for defense (see Jerusalem in Israelite Times).

7. *Took the strong hold.* To its defenders, Jebus seemed impregnable. It had held out against the Israelites for many years. Less than 4 mi. (6.4 km.) from Saul’s capital, Gibeah, the city still maintained its independence at the close of the reign of Saul.

Nevertheless the capital of the Jebusites was not able to withstand the prowess of David and his able commander.

8. *The gutter.* The word thus translated occurs elsewhere only in Ps. 42:7, where it is rendered “waterspout.” The term is now thought to apply to the water shaft of the ancient city. To bring water into the city from the spring Gihon, which was without the city gates, the Jebusites had cut a conduit some 50 ft. (15.2 m.) through the rock to a place where the water was collected in a reservoir. This, in turn, was connected by a 40-ft. (12.2-m.) vertical shaft with the foot of a stairway or ramp that led into the city. Women in the city would descend to the top of the shaft, drop their buckets into the cistern, and thus secure water without the necessity of venturing outside the city. By making one’s way through the watercourse and up the shaft, it might be possible to enter the Jebusite capital.

The verse presents some difficulties of translation. It would seem, from a comparison with 1 Chron. 11:6, that David made a proposal to his men promising that the man who accomplished the feat of entering the city should be “chief and captain.” According to 1 Chron. 11:6, “Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief.” It thus appears that Joab secured his position as commander of the armies of David from his successful capture of the Jebusite stronghold (see PP 703).

The lame and the blind. After an entrance into the city had been gained, it would probably be a comparatively easy task to open the gates to the main body of David’s forces, since, perhaps, only a small force of defenders would be on the city walls. The Jebusites had hurled at David the taunt that the lame and the blind would be sufficient to hold the city against him (see on v. 6); hence David now appears to use that term for the city’s defenders.

That are hated of David’s soul. This is a translation of the marginal reading of the Hebrew text. The text itself reads, “They hate the soul of David.”

The blind and the lame. The meaning of the proverbial expression thus introduced is not clear. To “house,” the LXX adds, “of the Lord.”

9. *Millo.* Probably some kind of terrace or fortification in the Jebusite city, already there when David captured Jerusalem, and to which numerous additions were made by later kings (see 1 Chron. 11:8; 1 Kings 9:15, 24; 11:27; 2 Kings 12:20; 2 Chron. 32:5).

And inward. Millo may have been the northeastern limit of the City of David. To the east the precipitous ravine of Kidron provided a strong natural defense. All David’s buildings would then be to the south of Millo and protected by it on the north. The work of further strengthening the city’s defenses was committed to Joab (1 Chron. 11:8).

10. *With him.* Compare 1 Chron. 11:9. The success of David was due not only to his own effort and prowess but to the presence and blessing of God. Ultimate success in life comes not by human might nor wisdom but by the Spirit of the Lord (see Zech. 4:6).

11. *Hiram.* There is some question as to whether this Hiram is the same as the Hiram who assisted Solomon in the building of the Temple (1 Kings 5:1; 2 Chron. 2:3). Considering the two to be identical appears to assign an unusually long, though not impossible, reign to one king. The events of this chapter took place early in David’s reign, whereas the Hiram connected with Solomon was still alive in the 24th year of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 9:10–14; cf. 6:1, 38; 7:1); this would make a total of more than 50 years of reign if the two Hiram were the same. Against the view claiming the two kings to be identical is the statement by Josephus that the Hiram who assisted Solomon

ruled for 34 years (*Against Apion* 1. 18). However, Josephus' chronological statements cannot always be trusted for accuracy.

Sent messengers. Hiram sought the alliance. This was a tribute to David's power.

Built David an house. The Phoenicians (see pp. 67–69) at this time had much more experience and skill in building than had the Hebrews, for both David and Solomon relied heavily upon them in the construction both of their palaces and the Temple. Archeologists confirm that the masonry of the early Hebrew period in Palestine was inferior to that of the Canaanites, who preceded them, and to whom the Phoenicians belonged.

12. His people Israel's sake. The Lord blessed David because of his own faithfulness and fidelity. He also blessed him because of His purpose to make the Hebrew people a spiritual kingdom upon earth. In taking over the aggressive leadership of the chosen people, David was working in harmony with the purposes of Heaven. Such a program always brings success and blessing.

13. More concubines and wives. With the increasing strength and prosperity came temptation and the danger that Israel would follow more and more in the ways of the nations about. It was the custom of Eastern monarchs to have a large harem, and David followed this custom. In this David did wrong, for the Lord had commanded: "Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away" (Deut. 17:17). The example set by David was followed by his successors, to their harm.

Sons and daughters. The total number of sons born to David, in Hebron and in Jerusalem, was 19 (see 1 Chron. 3:1–9). The names of the daughters, except Tamar (1 Chron. 3:9), are not given.

14. The names. The sons here mentioned (vs. 14–16) were born in Jerusalem; for those born in Hebron see ch. 3:2–5. The same list, with some variations, is found in 1 Chron. 3:5–8; 14:4–7. The first four born in Jerusalem were the children of Bathsheba (1 Chron. 3:5). They were consequently born at a later period of David's reign. All lists place Solomon last among the four sons of Bathsheba, but 2 Sam. 12:24 would indicate that he was the eldest of the surviving children (see 2 Sam. 12:14). The variations in these lists do not necessarily mean scribal errors. Two names not mentioned in this passage are found in the Chronicles list, and Chileab (2 Sam. 3:3) is called Daniel. The first is a matter of incompleteness, the second may merely indicate that one son bore more than one name.

17. When the Philistines heard. During the early years of his reign David had had no difficulty with the Philistines. In the time of his exile from Saul the Philistines had befriended him, and when David became king of Judah they hoped for friendship from him in opposition to Saul's house. They felt confident that they could retain their power over a divided Hebrew nation. But when David became king over all Israel, and succeeded in capturing Jebus and effected an alliance with Hiram of Tyre, the Philistines, fearing David's growing strength, determined to make war against Israel and curb the power of its new king.

Hold. Heb. *mešudah*, "the stronghold." The same Hebrew word is used in v. 7, and evidently the same fortification is meant (see PP 703, 704).

18. The valley of Rephaim. The phrase is translated "the valley of the giants" in Joshua 15:8. It was a fruitful valley extending to the southwest of Jerusalem, and provided ample room for a large encampment.

19. Enquired of the Lord. See on ch. 2:1.

Shall I go up? That is, to battle, not literally, “up,” for the Philistines were in a valley (see Judges 1:1; 12:3; 1 Sam. 7:7).

Doubtless deliver. Rather, “surely deliver.” The Hebrew has no adverb, but the construction is such as to require an emphatic translation of the verb.

20. Baal-perazim. Literally, “lord of the breaking through” or “possessor of the burstings.” Making a sudden attack upon the Philistines, David broke through their ranks and carried all before him. With the help of the Lord, the forces of Israel burst through the enemy resistance as waters burst through a dam. It was probably after their victory here that they named the place Baal-perazim.

21. Images. From the Heb. *‘aşab*, everywhere else translated “idol.” The parallel reference in 1 Chron. 14:12 has *‘elohim*, “gods.” When the Philistines ventured into battle they took the images of their gods with them, expecting thus to assure victory. The suddenness of the rout is indicated by the fact that in their flight they left their gods behind them.

Burned them. Literally, “took them away.” That the phrase should be understood as the KJV has translated it, is evident from 1 Chron. 14:12.

22. Yet again. The defeat only stirred the Philistines to greater efforts. Gathering still larger forces, they again came against David, determined to gain the victory.

23. Enquired of the Lord. See v. 19. David’s previous victory did not make him self-confident or conceited. To ask guidance from God was now his custom.

Not go up. See v. 19, where David was instructed by the Lord to “go up.” The enemy had returned to the same battleground and evidently expected David to employ the same method of attack as previously. This time they doubtless prepared for such a direct assault. But the Lord instructed David not to make a frontal attack.

Fetch a compass. That is, “Go around to their rear” (RSV). By making a circuit around the enemy and attacking them from an unexpected quarter, David gained the victory. God operates in various ways to give victory to His people. Sometimes those who have asked for divine aid are instructed simply to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord (see Ex. 14:13, 14; 2 Kings 19:7, 32, 35). At other times deliverance comes through God’s directing and blessing human effort. There is no manifestation of a lack of faith in one who, after presenting a petition to God, does all in his power to bring about its fulfillment.

Mulberry trees. The botanical identification is uncertain. Some versions read “balsam” (see RSV).

24. Going. Heb. *şe’adah*, literally, “marching.” The sound was to be to him a divine signal that God would be with him and that the armies of heaven would march before him. The masculine form *şe’ad* is employed in Judges 5:4 and Ps. 68:7 of the march of the hosts of God.

Bestir thyself. In the work of the Lord we must do our part. Those who sit idly by, expecting the Lord to act while they do nothing, unless the Lord has so directed, must expect defeat. God gave the word that David and his people were to bestir themselves, and promised that then He would go before them to smite the hosts of the Philistines. God’s promises, then and now, are conditional. When we do our part God will do His.

25. *David did so.* The secret of David's success was simple; he did precisely what God instructed him to do. When man puts his will above God's will he invites defeat. We will not always understand the reasons for God's commands, nor is this always necessary. All we are expected to do is to trust and obey. David implicitly obeyed the divine directions, and as a result there followed another great victory.

From Geba. The LXX reads, Gibeon. This is also the reading of the parallel passage in 1 Chron. 14:16. Geba, modern *Jeba'*, is nearly 6 mi. (9.6 km.) northeast of Jerusalem and Gibeon, *ej-Jib*, the same distance to the northwest. Evidently Gibeon is meant, for it lay directly in the path of retreat from the Valley of Rephaim to Gezer.

Gazer. Or Gezer. A fortress overlooking the Valley of Aijalon, 15 mi. west of Gibeon. The site, now called *Tell Jezer*, has been excavated and has yielded rich archeological evidence. When the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon attacked Gibeon, Joshua pursued them down the pass of Beth-horon and gained a notable victory over them in the Valley of Aijalon, where the sun was caused to stand still (Joshua 10:1–14). This was doubtless the same route now covered by David in his rout of the Philistines, for the road from Gibeon to Gezer led through the Valley of Aijalon. The flight in this northwesterly direction from Jerusalem was determined by the fact that David had “fetched a compass” around the Philistines, attacking them from the south and thus driving them to the north to Gibeon and thence toward Gezer. In the parallel account these battles are placed between David's unsuccessful (1 Chron. 13:5–14) and his successful (1 Chron. 15) attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 14:8–17). But Chronicles also records Hiram's assistance to David in the building of his house and the record of the children born to him at Jerusalem (1 Chron. 14:1–7) between his unsuccessful and successful efforts to bring the ark there. It will thus be noted that the sequence of events as recorded in 2 Sam. and 1 Chron. is not always the same. It is sometimes impossible to determine the exact details of the chronology involved. Evidently the order of events is less important than the facts themselves and the spiritual lessons to be gained from them. See PP 703, 704, which follows the sequence of 2 Sam.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–25PP 701–704

1–3PP 701

6, 7 PP 703

10 PP 702

11, 17, 18 PP 703

18–25PP 704

24 5T 728

CHAPTER 6

1 *David fetcheth the ark from Kirjath-jearim on a new cart. 6 Uzzah is smitten at Perezuzzah. 9 God blesseth Obed-edom for the ark. 12 David bringing the ark into Zion with sacrifices, danceth before it, for which Michal despiseth him. 17 He placeth it in a tabernacle with great joy and feasting. 20 Michal reproving David for his religious joy is childless to her death.*

1. *David gathered together.* See the same narrative, with a longer introduction, in 1 Chron. 13:1, 6–14. David purposed that Jerusalem should be not only the civil but also the religious capital of the nation. For many years the ark had been at Kirjath-jearim,

where it had been taken upon its return from the Philistines after the death of Eli (1 Sam. 7:1). David desired to house the ark in a national shrine at Jerusalem. Before proceeding with this purpose he called together the leaders of the nation (1 Chron. 13:1–4), to counsel with them regarding his plan.

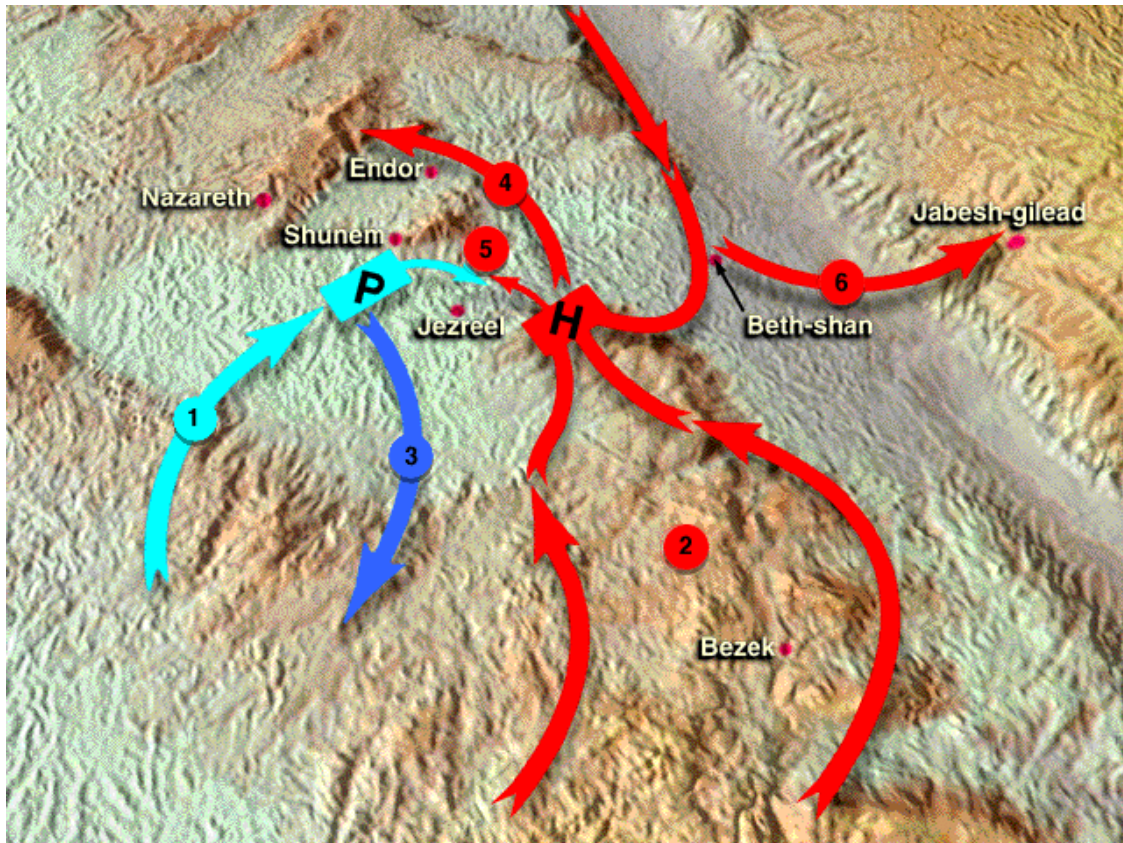
All the chosen men. The transfer of the ark was to be a matter of imposing display and national rejoicing. David requested 30,000 of the leading men of the realm to gather in Jerusalem to participate in the solemn festivities.

2. Baale of Judah. Another name for Kirjath-jearim (Joshua 15:9; 1 Chron. 13:6), about 9 mi. to the northwest of Jerusalem.

Saul's Last Battle Against the Philistines 1 Samuel 28–31

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¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Sa 1:17). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (1 Sa 28:2). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Name of the Lord. The ark was the symbol of the presence of God and thus was called by His holy name. God's people (Deut. 28:10) and His Temple (1 Kings 8:43) were also called by His name, literally, "the name of *Yahweh* is called upon" them, evidently in the sense of possession.

Between the cherubims. The word "between" is not in the Hebrew, and the relationship of the word "dwelleth" to the cherubim is a matter of interpretation. The word translated "dwelleth" is also frequently translated "to sit" (Gen. 18:1; 19:1; 21:16; etc.).

3. Upon a new cart. The law of Moses provided that the ark should be carried by the sons of Kohath (Num. 4:4–15; 7:9). David should have heeded this instruction, but he probably reasoned that the conveying of the ark on a new cart drawn by oxen would be a mark of special respect. He no doubt remembered that when the Philistines returned the ark to Israel they brought it on a new cart (1 Sam. 6:7–14). That was an entirely different situation, however, for they had acted according to the best of their knowledge. When the ark arrived in Israel it was taken from the cart by Levites (1 Sam. 6:15) in harmony with the divine directions to Moses.

In Gibeah. The ark was in Kirjath-jearim, not Gibeah. Perhaps Gibeah should here be translated instead of being rendered as a proper noun. *Gib'ah* means "hill," and is 65 times so translated (Gen. 49:26; Ex. 17:9; Num. 23:9; etc.). In that case the house of Abinadab was on the hill at Kirjath-jearim.

Sons of Abinadab. The ark had been placed in the house of Abinadab at least two or three generations earlier, after Eli's death (1 Sam. 4:15–18; 6:1; 7:1). The fact that Uzzah and Ahio are called "sons of Abinadab" means only that they were his descendants, in harmony with Hebrew usage of this term (see on 1 Sam. 14:50; see also Vol. I, pp. 181, 186). Since Uzzah and Ahio had exercised supervisory care of the ark while it was in their home, the responsibility of transferring it to Jerusalem was now placed in their charge. This, however, was definitely out of line with the Lord's explicit directions that the ark was to be borne upon the shoulders of Kohathite Levites (Num. 4:15; 7:9). There was no valid excuse for a disregard of the divine directions in this matter.

Drive the new cart. Although they drove the cart, they were not riding upon it. Ahio walked before the cart (v. 4) and Uzzah probably walked beside or behind the ark, where he could watch it (see v. 6).

5. Played before the Lord. The transfer of the ark to Jerusalem was to be made a joyous as well as impressive occasion. There was instrumental music as well as singing by the accompanying throngs. The ark represented to the people the presence of God, and they rejoiced in His presence (see 1 Chron. 13:8).

On harps. The listing of various types of musical instruments is an indication that there was much musical skill at the time of David. There is evidence from both Egypt and Mesopotamia of a high development of music at least 1,000 years before this time.

6. Nachon's threshingfloor. "The threshingfloor of Chidon" (1 Chron. 13:9), an instance of variant spellings or of a man or place being known by more than one name. There is no clue as to the location. Perhaps the oxen, when they came to the threshing floor, turned aside to snatch some of the scattered grain, thus causing the trouble.

Put forth his hand. The ark was holy. None but the priests, descendants of Aaron, were to touch it (Num. 4:15; PP 705). God is strict regarding His requirements. True, the Philistines had touched the ark and no harm had resulted, but they could not be held

accountable for what they did not know. The Israelites, however, knew the instruction that the Lord had given, but they disobeyed it.

7. Was kindled. Man sees only the outward appearance, but God looks upon the heart. To those accompanying Uzzah it might have seemed as if Uzzah's intentions were perfectly honorable—he was only trying to assist when he stretched forth his hand to steady the ark. But his heart was not right with God. His act of touching the ark was one of presumption. A sinful being should not have dared to touch that which symbolized the presence of God. The Lord could not permit to pass unnoticed this flagrant disregard of His express command. If Uzzah's sins had been allowed to go unpunished, his guilt might have involved many others. Those who knew of Uzzah's defections would have become greatly emboldened in sin if they had been allowed to conclude that faults like Uzzah's could go uncorrected and the offender be accepted of God. Uzzah's death served as a warning to many that the Lord is a righteous God, who requires strict obedience from all.

God smote him. Some have regarded the death of Uzzah as a judgment of disproportionate severity. The incident took place, however, in a theocratic regime, when civil penalties covered religious infractions and the death penalty was inflicted for offenses for which it is no longer applied (Ex. 22:20; Lev. 20:2, 9, 27; Num. 15:32–36; cf. Acts 5:1–11). Severe penalties are necessary to deter evil. If our present stringent laws against crime were relaxed, there would be a tremendous upsurge of lawlessness.

Uzzah had been so long in the presence of the ark that familiarity had bred in him a spirit of irreverence. He had been guilty of rash and foolhardy presumption, and the Lord had dealt with him accordingly. The startling catastrophe caused the assembled hosts of Israel to realize the importance of God's express commands and the awfulness of the sin of irreverence.

8. David was displeased. David's displeasure at the death of Uzzah was due largely to the fact that his own heart was not entirely right. If he had been fully at peace with God, he would have had no reason to fear and he would have accepted the will of the Lord. Whatever the Lord does is perfect, and whenever man becomes displeased with the works of God, it is an indication that there is something wrong with his own experience. It would have been well for David to humble himself and to search his heart for the evils that were lurking there rather than to find fault with God.

9. Was afraid. David feared that some sin in his own life might bring the divine judgment upon him (see PP 706).

10. Obed-edom. The name appears in 1 Chron. 15:18, 21; 26:4, 8, 15, but the identity cannot positively be established.

Gittite. Hardly a Gathite from Philistia but more likely a one-time inhabitant of the Levitical city Gath-rimmon in Dan or Manasseh, assigned to the Kohathites (Joshua 21:24–26). Thus Obed-edom may have been a member of the family especially appointed to bear the ark (Num. 4:15; 7:9).

11. Blessed Obed-edom. The presence of the ark in the home of Obed-edom brought a blessing, not a curse. Obed-edom knew how fearfully the Lord had punished irreverence when the ark had been dishonored. He had probably seen David and the thousands of Israel quivering with fear, afraid of the presence of the ark of God. Yet in spite of all this he welcomed the ark to his house.

All his household. The blessing that came upon Obed-edom was not for him alone but for all his household. Through faithful Abraham all the families of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. 12:2, 3). Happiness, prosperity, and peace come upon many when one man enjoys the presence of God. The man who receives a blessing is made a blessing.

12. It was told. The experience that came to Obed-edom demonstrated that although God is a holy God, He need not be dreaded by one who is humble and obedient. The nation had been watching to see what would come upon the Gittite and his family (PP 706). The blessing that came dispelled the gloom and foreboding that the death of Uzzah had produced.

13. They that bare the ark. David had learned the lesson of complete obedience to God's requirements. The ark was not now carried on a cart but, in harmony with the command of David (1 Chron. 15:2) and the word of God (Num. 4:5, 6, 15; 7:9; 1 Chron. 15:15), it was borne by Levites. The record given in Chronicles concerning the return of the ark is much more detailed and explicit than is the account here (see 1 Chron. 15:1–29).

Six paces. The death of Uzzah at the previous attempt to move the ark now caused David to proceed with extreme caution. The ark was at first moved only six paces, and when no evidence of the Lord's displeasure appeared, sacrifices were offered expressing the people's thanksgiving to God that His presence now was with them and His good will extended to them.

Oxen and fatlings. The Hebrew here is singular, "an ox and a fatling." The 13th verse is not in the LXX. In its place this version reads, "And there were with him bearing the ark seven bands [or choirs or choruses], and for a sacrifice a calf and lambs."

14. Danced before the Lord. David's dancing was an act of solemn and holy joy. To an Oriental of that day such an activity was a natural mode of expression, however strange it may seem to us today. By this means David expressed his grateful praise and thus gave honor and glory to God's holy name. There was nothing in the dancing of David that is comparable to or that will justify the modern dance. The popular dance draws no one nearer to God, nor does it inspire to purer thoughts or holier living. It degrades and corrupts. It unfits a man for prayer or study of the Word of God and turns him away from righteousness into ways of revelry. Morals are corrupted, time is worse than wasted, and often health is sacrificed (see PP 707).

A linen ephod. Compare 1 Chron. 15:27. David put aside his kingly robe for this occasion and wore a simple linen ephod of the type usually worn by the priests and others (see on 1 Sam. 2:18; cf. 1 Sam. 22:18; 2 Chron. 5:12). In doing this he did not assume priestly prerogatives; he was simply showing his people that he was willing to humble himself and become one with them in the service of God.

16. Despised him. Michal could not appreciate or understand the fervor that led David to associate with the people in giving such vivid expression to his joy in the Lord. When David sang and danced before God his act of worship was honored by Heaven, but it was despised by his wife. Michal, whose father had been ecstatic on more than one occasion (1 Sam. 10:10; 19:22–24), had no right to complain of David's exuberance. But the occasion may have provided the excuse for giving vent to her pent-up feelings of ill will. She had once fallen in love with David as a young hero, but her marriage to him had soon ended with his flight from Saul. Now some 20 years had passed, during which she had been married to another man, from whom she had been taken by force and handed

over to her former husband as a political prize after a long war against her father's house. The proud daughter of Saul was full of resentment and ready to find fault with David, even with his zeal for honoring the Lord in what was then an acceptable mode of praise.

17. *The tabernacle.* Not the ancient tabernacle, which was then at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39), but a new tent that David had especially prepared for the ark (2 Chron. 1:3, 4).

Burnt offerings. The regular altar of burnt offering was at this time with the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon (1 Chron. 21:29). But another altar must have been erected in Jerusalem. The burnt offerings were of a dedicatory nature, whereas the peace offerings were such as were provided for happy and joyous occasions, the larger part of the peace offerings being eaten by the people at a festive meal. 2 Sam. 6:16–19 is parallel with 1 Chron. 15:29 to 16:3. But Chronicles has added many details of the ceremonies on that occasion that are not found in the book of Samuel (1 Chron. 16:4–42).

18. *Blessed the people.* David was a spiritual as well as secular leader of his people. It was altogether fitting that the king of Israel, who had been selected for his position by God, should pronounce upon the people the divine blessing. Compare the blessing of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (1 Kings 8:14, 55).

19. *Dealt among all the people.* David had a liberal nature. When the people were about to depart a present was given to each from the royal bounty. This would send them to their homes in a happy, contented frame of mind, and would help them to forget their individual troubles and to sing the praises of their God and their king.

Good piece of flesh. Heb. *'eshpar*. The word occurs only here and in the parallel passage in 1 Chron. 16:3. Its meaning is uncertain. The translation of the KJV is the interpretation given to the word by the Jews. The Vulgate has, “a piece of beef for roasting.” Some modern scholars assign to *'eshpar* the meanings, “food of the traveler,” “provisions consisting of dates and cooked or raw cereals,” and “date-cake.”

A flagon of wine. Heb. *'ashishah*. This word has been defined literally as “a cake,” such as was prepared from dried grapes or raisins pressed or compacted into a certain form. “Of wine” is supplied in the KJV, but may have been implicit in the term *'ashishah* (see Hosea 3:1; PP 708).

The people departed. See 1 Chron. 16:4–42 for many additional details concerning the festivities and arrangements of the dedicatory exercises.

20. *To meet David.* David had passed his house while accompanying the ark on its way to its new tent and had been observed by Michal (v. 16). After completing the various dedicatory ceremonies, he returned to his home and was met by Michal, who in the meantime had been chafing with resentment, hardly able to wait for the opportunity to reproach her husband for the joyous exuberance he had displayed in the ceremonies connected with the transfer of the ark. Michal was completely out of harmony with the spirit of the festive occasion.

There are many in the church today who make a profession of religion but who, when they might be happy, are bitter in spirit. When they should be rejoicing in the Lord they are angry with their brethren. Instead of having their eyes fixed upon the things of God they spend their time finding fault with those who are happy in the Lord. To point this out is not to imply that excitement and emotionalism are necessarily conducive of spirituality. A public display of emotion is not always the measure of a soul's consecration; a quieter temperament may express a deeper devotion to God by the inward

lifting of the soul or by deeds of love. But if the outward manifestation is lacking because of inward apathy or indifference, then dignity becomes formalism.

How glorious. Instead of greeting her husband with a word of joyous welcome, Michal upbraided David with this cutting irony, accusing him of acting more like a buffoon than a king.

Uncovered himself. That is, removed his kingly attire and appeared in public in the simple linen ephod worn by priests and others (see on v. 14).

21. It was before the Lord. Michal needed to understand the true reason for David's conduct. She needed also to know that her selfish pride was back of her own bitterness of spirit. David felt that it was not the king but the Lord and His service that Michal had despised.

Before thy father. David reminded Michal of the fact that her father had been rejected by the Lord, but he had been chosen. God had found David's ways pleasing to Him. But Michal was taking the same arrogant attitude that had caused her father's rejection as king. David's words were not pleasant, but they were justified.

Will I play. David let Michal know that she had no just reason for her cutting words of reproach and that her accusation would not dampen his ardor nor cause him to change his course. He would continue to rejoice and make merry before the Lord in expressing his gratitude for all that God had done for him.

22. Vile. Heb. *qalal*, "to be slight," "to be trifling," and in the form here used, "to be lightly esteemed."

In mine own sight. The LXX here reads, "in thine eyes." If this is the correct reading, the meaning is much as above—the actions of David henceforth would be such as would cause him to be still more abased in the sight of Michal. On the other hand, if the Hebrew reading is accepted, then the meaning would be that David was ready to follow any course, however lowly it might appear even to himself, that would be for the honor and glory of God.

Of the maidservants. David trusted the common people to understand his religious zeal. He did not value Michal's opinion, nor did he expect the people to value it.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–23PP 704–711; SR 191–193

1–4PP 704

5–7PP 705

6, 7 CW 97; Ev 116; LS 321; MH 436; SR 192; TM 348, 462; 8T 284

8–10PP 705

9–11SR 192

11–13PP 706

12 SR 193

14 PP 707

16–20PP 708

17 SR 193

21–23PP 711

CHAPTER 7

1 Nathan first approving the purpose of David to build God an house, 4 after by the word of God forbiddeth him. 12 He promiseth him benefits and blessings in his seed. 18 David's prayer and thanksgiving.

1. Sat in his house. The word here translated “sat” also means “to dwell” and is frequently so rendered (see v. 2). The context seems to demand such a rendering here. The idea is, “while the king dwelt in his own house,” that is, after it had been built. David began to think of the inconsistency of having a beautiful home of his own but no place that could be called the house of God. See the parallel account of the events of this chapter in 1 Chron. 17.

Rest round about. The period of peace permitted David to give his time and energy to other things. Under these circumstances he began to contemplate the building of a temple for the worship of God.

2. Unto Nathan. This is the first mention of Nathan the prophet, but he was evidently already a confidential counselor of the king, to be consulted on important matters in which David desired specific directions from God. Nathan became a prominent figure in David’s reign and also in the reign of Solomon (see 2 Sam. 12; 1 Kings 1:10–12, 34, 38).

Within curtains. The word for “curtains” is that used in Ex. 26 and 36 for the covering of the tabernacle. The tent in which the ark was housed was a temporary structure probably similar to the Mosaic tabernacle. The original tabernacle and the altar of burnt offering were at Gibeon (1 Chron. 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3–6). With the ark in a tent in Jerusalem, there were now two national shrines. It was the Lord’s purpose, however, that there should be only one central place of worship (Deut. 12:13, 14), and it was David’s plan to establish one great national shrine in Jerusalem.

3. Nathan said. Nathan was a prophet, but at the moment was evidently expressing his own private opinion. A prophet can give to men an inspired message only if God has given to *him* such a message. It is the prophet’s privilege when confronted with a difficult question to pray for an inspired answer, but the disposition of the answer is of the Lord. There are times when the Lord sees it is better for men to make their own decisions and thus develop the faculty of wise judgment. At other times He is pleased to send a divine message. Such divine communications are frequently qualified by the distinguishing statement, “Thus saith the Lord” (see v. 5).

Go, do all. The purpose expressed by David appeared good and Nathan naturally thought that it was right for the king to carry it into execution. The prophet, however, had not received any confirmatory message. He spoke according to his own sense of right, and not in response to divine revelation.

4. Word of the Lord came. The communication was distinctly marked as coming from God (see on v. 3), and was in direct opposition to Nathan’s earlier expressed view. There is no evidence, however, of any spirit of rebellion on the part of Nathan when he was asked to return to the king and acknowledge his previous error. It requires divine grace to admit that one has made a mistake and to set about graciously to rectify the error.

5. My servant David. David was a servant of God and had himself spoken by inspiration, as in the composition of his psalms. To him also applied the title “prophet” (Acts 2:30). On this occasion the Lord chose to speak to him not directly, but through another prophet. God works through different individuals and divine light comes through various channels. Similarly today, God works through the organization of His church and calls for mutual love and confidence among the brethren and warns against the danger of individual independence. If David had possessed pride of opinion, he might have become highly incensed at having his ideas crossed. Instead he accepted the divine rebuke, even though it was contrary to both his own purpose and the prophet’s judgment.

Thus saith the Lord. When messages come bearing this label men ought to give heed. If there is suspicion as to the genuineness of the message (see John 4:1), tests have been specified in the Word of God whereby the validity of the claims may be tested (Num. 12:6; Deut. 13:1–3; 18:22; Matt. 7:15–20; John 4:1–3). The responsibility is ours to discover the source of the communication, and if it be of God, to follow it.

Build me an house? The question implies a negative answer. The parallel passage reads: “Thou shalt not build me an house” (1 Chron. 17:4).

6. Whereas. Or “for” or “because.” The reason why David should not build the house for God is here given.

Since the time. It was now about 450 years since the Exodus (see on 1 Kings 6:1). During that time the tabernacle had been the earthly dwelling place of God. It had frequently been moved from place to place, and even now the time had not yet arrived for a permanent place of worship for the children of Israel. These temporary arrangements having continued for so long a time, a tent could suffice for a little while longer until arrangements could be made for the building of the Temple.

7. The tribes of Israel. The parallel passage reads, “the judges of Israel” (1 Chron. 17:6). The difference in Hebrew is in only a single letter. The LXX gives “tribes” in both references.

8. Sheepcote. Literally, “an abode,” here evidently of sheep.

9. Have made thee. This may be translated as a future, “will make thee,” although the Jewish scholars who introduced a form of punctuation into the Hebrew text between the 6th and 9th centuries A.D. inserted a mark that, if valid, requires the verb to be translated in the past tense.

10. Afflict them any more. All through the period of the judges the Israelites had been suffering affliction at the hand of their enemies. This was not in harmony with the purposes of God, and the Lord now promised them a period of cessation from oppression. The promise, however, was conditional. A glorious destiny would be theirs only on condition that they work in harmony with the plans and objectives of heaven. But because of a persistent refusal to accept their high privilege the Lord’s professed people were repeatedly allowed to fall into the hands of their enemies until they were destroyed as a nation and rejected as God’s chosen people.

11. Have caused thee to rest. By a change of punctuation (see on v. 9) this may be translated as a future. If the events of ch. 8 follow chronologically, David was yet to see more wars. Nevertheless the words may be construed to refer to the temporary cessation of war mentioned in ch. 7:1. In that event the translation of the KJV should be retained.

An house. God would establish the family of David, securing the succession of the throne to his posterity.

12. Set up thy seed. This has primary reference to Solomon, David’s successor and the builder of the Temple. But David was also shown that the Messiah was to come in his lineage (see Acts 2:30).

13. For ever. Had Israel been true to God the nation of Israel would have continued forever and the glorious Temple would never have been destroyed (see PK 46, 564). That which God purposed to do for the world through the nation of the Hebrews He is now accomplishing through the church (PK 713, 714). Regardless of the failure of man, God’s purpose will ultimately be carried out in the establishment of an eternal kingdom through

Christ (Luke 1:31–33; cf. Ps. 89:29, 36, 37; Dan. 2:44; Dan. 7:14, 27; Obadiah 21; Micah 4:7; Heb. 1:8).

14. *I will be his father.* See 1 Chron. 22:9, 10; 28:6. In this promise God was identifying Himself with David and his seed. Those who followed David on the throne of Israel were to reign in the name of the Lord, as sons of God and representatives of heaven. When the literal descendants failed, the promises were fulfilled in Christ (see Heb. 1:5).

Chasten him. God's chastenings are acts of love. His judgments are sent to bring men back to their senses and back to righteousness. A wise and loving parent will chasten the child he loves (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:5–10). The clause is omitted in 1 Chron. 17:13.

Rod of men. God frequently employs men to chasten men. His judgments upon nations are often sent through nations (see Isa. 10:5, 6; Jer. 51:20). Assyria and Babylon were sent to chasten Israel and Judah.

15. *Shall not depart.* A conditional promise that could not be fulfilled because of human failure. The privileges now belong to spiritual Israel.

From Saul. Saul, too, had been promised the kingdom “for ever” (see 1 Sam. 13:13).

Before thee. Literally, “from thy faces,” that is, from thy presence. These promises were conditionally true of David.

16. *Shall be established.* Because of the failure of David's descendants these important promises will be ultimately fulfilled only through Christ and His church (see Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 23:5, 6; 33:14–21).

17. *So did Nathan speak.* Up to this point the record has been of the commission that Nathan received from the Lord for David (vs. 5–16). This verse states that he carried it out.

18. *Sat before the Lord.* Probably in the tabernacle in which the ark rested. David was overwhelmed at the revelation that had been given to him. He was not to be permitted to build the Temple, but the promises made to him entirely compensated for the initial disappointment.

Who am I, O Lord God? As David sat in meditation he probably reviewed the years that had gone, thinking first of himself as a humble shepherd lad wandering over the hills and becoming acquainted with the ways of God; then how he had been chosen for the kingdom, but had fled over the hills of Judah as a fugitive, little knowing one day what new trial and danger the next would bring forth. Now at length he enjoyed peace, and with it came the promise from God as to the future of his kingdom. David was overwhelmed at the thought. With deep humility and utter self-abnegation he cried out, “Who am I, O Lord God?” By human standards David would be considered a man of extraordinary accomplishments, an unusual leader, a man of deep piety and great courage, a man of honor and success, one of the world's greatest poets and one of history's outstanding kings. But David felt deeply humble before his Maker, and as totally unworthy of the high honor God bestowed upon him and his house.

The word “God” is here written in capital and small capital letters—“GOD.” This is done to indicate that it is a translation of *Yahweh*. When *Yahweh* stands alone or in combination with *'Elohim* it is translated “Lord.” When it is preceded by *'Adonai*, “Lord,” as here, it is rendered “GOD” (see Vol. I, pp. 35, 173).

19. The manner of man. Literally, “the law of man,” that is, human law. The meaning of this phrase is obscure. The parallel passage reads, “and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree.”

20. Say more. David was overwhelmed at the honor shown him and words failed him to express his gratitude.

Knowest thy servant. David knew that the Lord was acquainted with him and could read the thoughts of praise and thanksgiving that filled his heart.

21. For thy word’s sake. “For thy servant’s sake” (1 Chron. 17:19). For the latter expression see Ps. 132:10; cf. 2 Chron. 6:42.

22. Thou art great. See Ps. 86:8–10; 71:19; 89:6–8.

23. Is like thy people. David considered it the highest privilege to be numbered among the people of God. What nation could be greater or more highly honored than one chosen by the Lord as His (see Deut. 4:7, 32–34)?

A people to himself. The reference is to the Exodus. God manifested His great interest in Israel by redeeming them from their position as a race of slaves in Egypt.

To make him a name. The Exodus made God’s name great among the nations of earth, for it displayed His incomparable power over the greatest nations of earth.

Great things and terrible. Compare Deut. 10:21. The thoughts that were then going through David’s mind as he contemplated the Lord’s wonderful dealings with Israel at the time of the Exodus were similar to the thoughts of Moses as expressed in Deut. 4:7, 32–34.

Their gods. The gods of Egypt were many, famous, and supposedly powerful. The Exodus was recognized as a triumph not only over the land of Egypt but over the gods of Egypt. When Israel triumphantly left Egypt there was no need for further question among any of the Egyptians as to who was the true God. The Egyptian gods themselves had no might, but Satan manifested his power in their behalf, and the Exodus was thus another victory of God over Satan in the great controversy of the ages.

24. Become their God. God had promised to establish Abraham’s posterity in the land of Canaan and to be their God (Gen. 17:7, 8). Through Moses He promised to redeem the seed of Abraham from Egyptian bondage, and to be their God (Ex. 6:7, 8). Those promises had now been fulfilled.

26. Let thy name be magnified. The overtone of David’s prayer was that glory might come to the name of God. Those who seek to magnify themselves reflect the attitude of Lucifer, who desired to exalt his “throne above the stars of God” and aimed to “be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13, 14). By contrast the song of the unfallen angels is “glory to God in the highest” (Luke 2:14) and “blessing, and honour, and glory, and power” unto “him that sitteth upon the throne” (Rev. 5:13). The secret of David’s greatness was his humility. He who is willing to humble himself as a little child is “greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:4).

28. Thy words be true. David had confidence that the Lord would abide by His promises. He had faith that his prayer would be answered. His prayer was, in fact, the acceptance of the wonderful and gracious promises of God.

29. Be blessed for ever. The parallel passage reads: “Thou blessest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever” (1 Chron. 17:27). When God promises man a blessing there is no power on earth strong enough to reverse it, except a perverse human will that refuses to meet the conditions (see Num. 23:20). Men dishonor God when they doubt His

promises or fail to claim His blessings. The Christian life would be much happier and hope would be the brighter if all would have more confidence in the certainty of the promises of God. David's life was both happy and fruitful when he cheerfully resigned himself to the will of God. It was his hope and purpose to build the Temple, but that task, he was told, was not for him. Humbly he submitted to the divine will, accepting those tasks that God had for him, and not permitting himself to become sullen and morose because he was not permitted to carry out his own purpose. Many consider themselves slighted and rejected if not allowed to proceed with all their desires. Others are determined to go forward with tasks for which they are not fitted and to which the Lord has not called them, vainly endeavoring to accomplish a work for which they are insufficient, meanwhile neglecting to do those things that are within their powers and to which they are called by the Lord. This chapter is a striking example of resignation to God's will.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–29PP 711–713

2, 3 PP 750

2–5, 8–10PP 711

4–13MH 473

11–13, 18, 19 PP 712

CHAPTER 8

1 David subdueth the Philistines and the Moabites. 3 He smiteth Hadadezer, and the Syrians. 9 Toi sendeth Joram with presents to bless him. 11 The presents and the spoil David dedicateth to God. 14 He putteth garrisons in Edom. 16 David's officers.

1. Smote the Philistines. After David had been established on the throne he enjoyed a period of peace that was utilized for the organization and upbuilding of his kingdom. Realizing the strength of Israel, the surrounding nations refrained from attack, and David contented himself with affairs within his realm. At length, however, he decided to reduce his enemies to submission so that they would not be in a position to attack whenever the opportunity might present itself. The Philistines were defeated and made tributary, and part of their territory was annexed to Israel.

Metheg-ammah. The meaning of this name is obscure. Some interpret it as “bridle of the mother city,” “bridle” probably being used in the sense of authority. According to the parallel passage, David took “Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Chron. 18:1). Gath, the mother city, the metropolis of the Philistines, is thus probably referred to. This important place was now annexed to Israel. Its retention by David would denote the complete subservience of the Philistines to Israel.

2. Smote Moab. David had previously enjoyed friendly relations with Moab, the Moabites having provided an asylum for his father and mother while he was a fugitive from Saul (1 Sam. 22:3, 4). The cause of David's change of attitude toward Moab is not certainly known. There is a Jewish tradition to the effect that the Moabites had proved false to their trust and had slain David's father and mother. For this there is no verification. It may also be true that in David's war with the Philistines, Moab was guilty of some treachery, and thus became the object of his next determined attack.

There is no need to assume, as some do, that Moab is mentioned here by mistake for Ammon. Moab's rebellion under Mesha (2 Kings 1:1; 3:4–27) proves that the country was brought under the dominion of Israel. Apart from this record there is no account of

the subjugation of Moab. The argument of silence, however, is in itself not sufficient evidence of the continued servitude of Moab from the time of David to the death of Ahab. There may have been other rebellions and resubjugations during the intervening years.

Casting them down to the ground. Literally, “causing them to lie down on the ground.” It would seem that David forced the Moabites to lie on the ground, and then measured them off with a line into three parts, two of which were put to death and the third was saved alive. The parallel passage (1 Chron. 18:2) makes no mention of this. The reason for such drastic treatment is not given. Perhaps information as to the causes of the war would help to account for the measures.

3. *Hadadezer.* Sometimes spelled, “Hadarezer” (1 Chron. 18:3, 5, 7, 10; etc.). “Hadadezer” is evidently the more correct spelling, for Hadad was the name of an important Syrian god. The title of this god appears also in the name Benhadad (1 Kings 20:1, 2; 2 Kings 8:7).

Zobah. A small Aramaean kingdom west of the Euphrates and northeast of Damascus, about 50 mi. south of Hamath. The kingdom flourished in the days of Saul, David, and Solomon (see 1 Sam. 14:47; 1 Chron. 18:3; 2 Chron. 8:3). In the period of the Assyrian domination this region became a province with the name, *Ṣubutu*.

At the river Euphrates. This verse gives some idea of the wide extent of David’s domain. The border of Israel proper did not extend to the Euphrates, but the nations of that region had been brought to recognize David as their overlord.

4. *A thousand chariots.* The word “chariots” is not found in the Hebrew, which reads “a thousand and seven hundred horsemen.” The parallel text (1 Chron. 18:4), however, has “a thousand chariots,” suggesting that “chariots” should be supplied in the Samuel account as in the KJV.

Seven hundred horsemen. The LXX reads “seven thousand horsemen,” which is the number given in 1 Chron. 18:4.

Houghed. That is, hamstrung. The procedure was to cut the sinews of the hind legs of the horses and thus render the animals unfit for use in war (see Joshua 11:6–9).

Reserved of them. Whether or not David did wrong in this we are not told. He probably felt the need for a number of horses to be used as a means of rapid communication. Yet the introduction of these horses may have been the entering wedge for Solomon’s multiplication of horses (1 Kings 4:26; 10:26, 28, 29) in direct violation of Deut. 17:16.

5. *The Syrians of Damascus.* There were many groups of Syrians or Aramaeans, but those of Damascus were the most powerful and the most famous (see 1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 16:5–12; etc.).

6. *Preserved David.* Compare v. 14 and ch. 7:9. David lived a dangerous life, being in frequent conflict with his foes. But the Lord gave him victory and preserved him from danger. God’s protecting care became the subject of many of David’s psalms (see Ps. 18; 34; and others).

7. *Shields of gold.* Probably gold-plated shields. Such shields may have been used largely for purposes of display rather than for protection in actual combat. Solomon also made shields of gold that were displayed in his famous “house of the forest of Lebanon” (1 Kings 10:17). For “shields,” the LXX reads “bracelets.”

8. From Betah, and from Berothai. Betah, in Aram-zobah, is unknown. Berothai may be *Bereitan*, 8 mi. (13 km.) south of Baalbek.

Brass. Brass is correctly an alloy which is made of copper and zinc. The term “brass” in the Bible usually applies to bronze, an alloy of copper and tin, or to copper. These metals were in common use in the ancient Orient. Many objects made of them have been found in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Syria. David saved this bronze and other metals for the future temple (v. 11). Solomon used the bronze taken from the Syrians for “the brasen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass” of the Temple (1 Chron. 18:8).

9. Hamath. A kingdom on the Orontes River. It was tributary to Solomon (1 Kings 4:24; 2 Chron. 8:3, 4), regained its independence and was again recovered for Israel by Jeroboam II (2 Kings 14:28), and was finally reduced by Assyria (2 Kings 19:13; Isa. 37:13).

10. Joram. For Toi to place his son in charge of the delegation was an indication of the high regard he had for David.

Brought with him vessels. The bringing of such presents was generally regarded in the East as equivalent to the payment of tribute. The reign of David greatly enhanced the influence of Israel over wide areas of Western Asia.

11. Did dedicate. Instead of using these gifts for himself David dedicated them to the Lord. David had a great desire to see the Temple built, and even though he himself would not be permitted to proceed with this task, he made every provision possible for its erection.

12. Of Syria. The LXX, the Syriac, and several MSS of the Hebrew have “Edom.” Also the otherwise identical list of these nations given in 1 Chron. 18:11, has “Edom” instead of “Syria.” Both nations were actually conquered by David. The two names, Syria (*’aram*) and Edom (*’edom*) differ only by one letter in consonantal Hebrew. Where the word for Syria has an *r* the word for Edom has a *d*. The two letters look so nearly alike that they are frequently confused. For example, Hadadezer (2 Sam. 8:10) is written Hadarezer in 2 Sam. 10:16, 19. For the forms of the Hebrew *d* and *r* see p. 14.

Of Ammon. Since ch. 10 tells of trouble with Ammon after apparently unbroken friendliness from the time of David’s early days, some commentators conclude that the present verse lists all the nations whose spoils David dedicated, throughout his reign, including the nations attacked in the wars of ch. 10.

Amalek. This is the only reference to a war with Amalek after David became king. Saul had gained a great victory over Amalek (1 Sam. 15), and afterward David, as a fugitive, smote certain bands of the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30).

13. The Syrians. The LXX, the Syriac, and several Hebrew MSS have “Edomites.” The parallel text of 1 Chron. 18:12 also has “the Edomites” (see on 2 Sam. 8:12 for a possible confusion of the two names). That the Edomites are intended is clear from the fact that the smiting took place in “the valley of salt,” which was in Edom (2 Kings 14:7; Ps. 60, title; see also on 2 Sam. 8:14, which is evidently a sequel).

Eighteen thousand men. Abishai, the brother of Joab, is named as the general of David who slew these 18,000 men (1 Chron. 18:12). Joab himself slew 12,000 Edomites in the same locality (Ps. 60, title). There is a record also of a campaign of Joab in which he smote “every male in Edom” (1 Kings 11:15, 16).

14. Put garrisons in Edom. The great victory gained by David’s forces over the Edomites in the valley of salt (2 Sam. 8:13; 1 Chron. 18:12) was followed by the placing

of garrisons there, in the same manner as David had previously placed garrisons in Syria (2 Sam. 8:6).

16. Over the host. After giving a list of David's victories over his enemies, the writer of Samuel gives a brief summary of the principal officers over the realm (vs. 16–18) and the same is true of the writer of Chronicles (1 Chron. 18:15–17). Substantially the same list of officers is again given in 2 Sam. 20:23–26. For the elevation of Joab to this post see 1 Chron. 11:6.

Recorder. Apparently an official of importance, a kind of chancellor. He not only kept a record of the affairs of state, particularly for the information of the king, but was also the king's adviser. Jehoshaphat, who was David's recorder, continued to hold the same office in the early part of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 4:3).

17. Zadok. Here Zadok and Ahimelech are listed as priests, evidently high priests, since the list comprises the highest officials of the kingdom. Zadok has already appeared earlier in the history of David's reign, where he is named jointly with Abiathar in connection with the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:11). During David's reign the two are repeatedly named as colleagues, apparently equal.

Three reasons have been suggested as to why David followed the seemingly strange procedure of having two high priests: (1) The two priests represented the two lines descended from Aaron's sons Eleazar and Ithamar respectively (see 1 Chron. 24:1–6, where Zadok and Abiathar's son, Ahimelech, are mentioned). (2) In reuniting Judah and Israel after a long war, David may have hoped to cement the unity of national religious sentiment by dividing the high priesthood between the two houses. The priestly line of Abiathar had been almost wiped out by Saul (1 Sam. 22:9–20) for help given to David, but the branch represented by Zadok remained faithful to Saul, at least until David became king of all Israel (1 Chron. 12:23–28). (3) The national worship of Jehovah was not yet centralized, for the ark was at Jerusalem, and the tabernacle at Gibeon, where it had been taken after the massacre at Nob; therefore there was need for two high-ranking priests, and Zadok is specifically mentioned as ministering at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39, 40). For the history of Zadok and his partners in office, see the next section on Ahimelech.

Ahimelech. Mentioned as the son of Abiathar not only here but also in the parallel passage of 1 Chron. 18:16 (spelled "Abimelech"), and in 1 Chron. 24:6, which refers to a later occasion. But David's joint high priests (see on "Zadok," above) are repeatedly named as "Zadok and Abiathar" throughout his life, and even at the beginning of Solomon's reign. Therefore the mention of Zadok and Ahimelech in the present verse and in Chronicles has raised speculation about "scribal errors" and "confused names," especially since Ahimelech is called the son of Abiathar, and Abiathar the son of Ahimelech.

But there is no need to assume any errors. Critics do not always take into account the fact that their supposed difficulty may as readily arise from the lack of complete information as from a mistake on the part of the ancient writer or his copyists. Scattered references to several generations of a priestly family do not constitute a complete narrative. For example, let us imagine a foreigner, unfamiliar with American history, reading a book on American politics. He might be puzzled to understand references to Cleveland as the President following Benjamin Harrison, along with other statements that

he preceded Harrison. If he read the whole history of that period, he would find that both are correct.

The statements about Ahimelech, Abiathar, and Ahimelech permit the following reconstruction of the events. The Ahimelech who gave the shewbread to the fugitive David at Nob was the son of Ahitub (1 Sam. 22:9–12), and was a descendant of Eli, for his son Abiathar fulfilled the prophecy concerning the house of Eli (1 Kings 2:27). According to the genealogy of 1 Sam. 14:3, Ahimelech must have been an old man when he helped David. His son Abiathar might also have been high priest at the same time (see on Mark 2:26), if he held the office jointly with his father. Or he may have been the functioning high priest while his father was “high priest emeritus” as was evidently the relationship between Eli and his sons and between Annas and Caiaphas in the time of Christ (see on Luke 3:2). When Saul had the priests of Ahimelech’s family slain, Abiathar escaped with the ephod, the symbol of his office (see on Ex. 28:6–30), and became adviser and priest to the outlawed David (1 Sam. 22:20; 23:6, 9; 30:7). Abiathar and Zadok are again mentioned as joint high priests in connection with the festal ceremony of bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem (1 Chron. 15:11, 12). Henceforth Zadok and Abiathar are repeatedly named together as “the priests” in the latter part of David’s life (2 Sam. 15:29, 35, 36; 17:15; 19:11; 20:25), and even early in Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 4:4).

After the victories of David’s armies over various foreign foes, the consolidation of the kingdom, and the secure establishment of domestic justice, as described in the present chapter (vs. 1–15), we find a list of David’s highest officials. But here are included the names of Zadok and Ahimelech, “the priests,” as in the parallel passage (1 Chron. 18:16). Abiathar was apparently replaced for a time by his son. There is nothing to indicate how long Ahimelech held this office, or why it was not permanent. Perhaps he was made priest temporarily, during a time when his father was in poor health. Perhaps the older man may have been brought out of intended retirement by unexpected developments—possibly Absalom’s rebellion. Though the Bible does not inform us on these matters, there could have been changes in the priesthood for a number of reasons. There is no need to assume a scribal error.

Once more, years later, we find Ahimelech participating in a public ceremony. This was preceding the coronation of Solomon, when the aged David assigned the duties of the Levites in the future service of the anticipated Temple. Lots were cast before David and before “Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar” (1 Chron. 24:1–3; cf. vs. 6, 31) as representatives of the two branches of the family of Aaron. It is not at all surprising that on this occasion Abiathar was not present, for he had but recently been active in Adonijah’s attempt to seize the throne (1 Kings 1:5–7, 19). In his absence it was natural that his son Ahimelech should function as the head of the house of Ithamar, opposite Zadok of the house of Eleazar. So the linking of his name with Zadok here does not require another change in the office of high priest. Ahimelech is not called a priest, although he is mentioned three times (1 Chron. 24:3, 6, 31). Zadok alone was anointed high priest at Solomon’s coronation (1 Chron. 29:22).

Abiathar is still named, however, in the first list of high officials at the beginning of Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 4:4; cf. v. 1, which implies that this list refers to the beginning of the reign), that is, before David’s death. Solomon probably retained him in office out of respect for David’s esteem for him as an old friend and counselor. At least he did not

depose Abiathar from the priesthood until after David's death, and then not until Adonijah made what Solomon considered to be another threatening move (1 Kings 2:22, 26, 27). Thenceforth Zadok was the sole high priest (1 Kings 2:35).

Thus it is evident that the various accounts are complementary, not contradictory, and hence require no revision.

The scribe. Evidently a high position, comparable to that of secretary of state (see 2 Kings 12:10; 18:37; 19:2).

18. Benaiah. At Solomon's coronation Benaiah, formerly captain over the Cherethites and Pelethites, replaced Joab as commander in chief (1 Kings 4:4).

Chief rulers. From the Heb. *kohen*, literally, "priest." The reference here is probably to some secular office. The LXX reads, "princes of the court."

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

15 Ed 152; PP 719

CHAPTER 9

1 *David by Ziba sendeth for Mephibosheth. 7 For Jonathan's sake he entertaineth him at his table, and restoreth him all that was Saul's. 9 He maketh Ziba his farmer.*

1. The house of Saul. David's kingdom was now secure, and there was little danger of any of the descendants of Saul seeking to obtain the throne. The king's generous nature now manifested itself in his desire to show some kindness to the memory of Jonathan.

For Jonathan's sake. Jonathan died with his father Saul at the battle of Mt. Gilboa (ch. 1:4, 17). His son Mephibosheth was then only five years old (ch. 4:4). Since Mephibosheth now had a young son, the experience here related must have taken place a number of years after David had come to the throne. But David had not forgotten his great friendship with Jonathan, and was now desirous of showing kindness to the house of his fallen enemy out of memory to his friend.

3. The kindness of God. That is, the kindness prompted by God, the kindness God constantly exercises toward the children of men.

Hath yet a son. It seems that Mephibosheth, fearful of his life, had secluded himself so successfully that his whereabouts were known to only a few of the closest friends of the house of Saul.

4. Lo-debar. A place to the east of the Jordan, near Mahanaim (ch. 17:27–29). Machir was evidently a man of wealth and influence. Up till this time he had undoubtedly been secretly loyal to the house of Saul, giving refuge to the crippled son of Jonathan and his family. David was later to reap the fruit of his kindness to the house of Saul, for, when he fled from Absalom, Machir the son of Ammiel responded with liberality in supplying him and his army with the necessities of life (ch. 17:27–29).

6. Mephibosheth. Called "Merib-baal" in 1 Chron. 8:34 and 9:40. The Heb. *bosheth*, meaning "shame," seems to have been substituted by the Hebrews in proper names in place of the heathen title Baal. Compare Ish-bosheth and Esh-baal (see on 2 Sam. 2:8), Jerubbaal and Jerubbesheth (Judges 6:32; 2 Sam. 11:21).

He fell on his face. Mephibosheth realized that his life was at the mercy of the king. If David had so desired, he could have given orders for his execution in order that the seed of Saul might be completely wiped out of existence, and that there would be no possibility for a rival to arise from that source who might claim the throne.

Behold thy servant! Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul, and his childhood memories were of the struggle between his uncle Ish-bosheth and David. He now stood before the king, pledging loyalty to the house of David. Henceforth he would be a servant of the king, faithfully doing his bidding.

7. *Fear not.* Anyone in Mephibosheth's position might have had reason to fear. The life of this descendant of Saul depended upon the attitude of the king. Frequently such situations resulted in the extermination of all rivals. David knew that as long as any of the offspring of Saul continued to live, his own throne might be in jeopardy. But his generous nature, together with his promise to Jonathan, prompted him to a course of kindness and mercy.

Shew thee kindness. Life had thus far brought Mephibosheth little of kindness. Nearly as far back as he could remember he had been a cripple and a fugitive. His life had been in danger. Now his troubles were at an end.

All the land of Saul. This land had undoubtedly been confiscated by David and now belonged to him. But he would give it back, himself making a personal sacrifice in order that Mephibosheth might possess all that had once belonged to Saul. It was a magnificent gift that was prompted by a remarkable spirit of generosity toward one who did not expect it.

Eat bread at my table. The expression need not be taken literally. The basic meaning is that the one to whom such a favor was shown was henceforth to be supported from the king's bounty—in other words, he was to receive a life pension. Thus the 400 prophets of the grove did "eat at Jezebel's table" (1 Kings 18:19). This simply means that these prophets, who were probably scattered throughout the realm, received their support from the queen. Thus also Jehoiachin, after his release from prison, "did eat bread continually" before the king "all the days of his life" (2 Kings 25:29, 30). That is, a daily allowance was provided for him as long as he lived. In the case of Mephibosheth, however, special honor was involved, since he was placed on a par with David's own sons (2 Sam. 9:11). He was to be treated like one of the children of David. Such treatment served further to endear David to Mephibosheth and to ensure mutual good will.

8. *Such a dead dog as I am.* See 1 Sam. 24:14; 17:43. The wild dogs of the East were the scavengers of the community, and were looked upon with loathing. A dead dog was about as contemptible a thing as could be imagined. By these words Mephibosheth showed himself truly humble in spirit and sincerely grateful. Such an expression was not an overstatement from the Oriental point of view.

9. *Ziba.* Ziba must have been a man of influence and responsibility. He had the confidence of David, and he had not been unfaithful to the posterity of Saul. However, he may not have been above seeking his own interest (see chs. 16:1–4; 19:24–30).

10. *Thy sons, and thy servants.* Since there were 15 sons and 20 servants, the estate of Saul that was turned over to Mephibosheth must have been of considerable extent. Instead of being a hapless fugitive Mephibosheth now became a man of position and wealth.

11. *So shall thy servant do.* The servant of Saul acknowledged himself to be the servant of David. Ziba promised to obey all the king's commands. He was given an opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 16:1–4).

At my table. This is the third time this statement is made (see vs. 7, 10). Its repetition shows its importance and the greatness of the honor that was being bestowed on Mephibosheth.

12. Had a young son. This statement indicates that Mephibosheth was already grown and that a number of years had passed since the death of his father and David's accession to the throne, inasmuch as Mephibosheth was only five years of age when Jonathan died (ch. 4:4). As far as our information goes, Mephibosheth had only one son, Micah, but Micah's posterity was numerous (1 Chron. 8:35–40; 9:40–44).

13. Dwelt in Jerusalem. There may have been a double purpose in retaining Mephibosheth at Jerusalem. It would be both a matter of safeguard and of special honor. Dwelling at the palace with the rest of the sons of David and being constantly associated with them would serve to draw Mephibosheth ever closer to David and would thus ensure peaceful and happy relationships between the house of David and the house of Saul. If Mephibosheth were of an evil disposition, refusing to respond loyally to the treatment extended to him, he would be under constant surveillance at the palace and away from the influences of David's enemies, who might wish to foster revolt. That the possibility of revolt was not absent is evident from Ziba's statement at the time of David's flight from Absalom. To David this servant of Mephibosheth made the accusation that his master was hoping, out of the unsettled conditions, to have the kingdom restored to the house of Saul (see chs. 16:1–4; 19:24–30).

Was lame. Because of his lameness Mephibosheth was prevented from leaving Jerusalem at the time of Absalom's uprising. It was his staying behind in Jerusalem that gave plausibility to the charge that Mephibosheth was disloyal (chs. 16:3; 19:25–27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-13PP 713

CHAPTER 10

1 *David's messengers, sent to comfort Hanun the son of Nahash, are villainously entreated.*
6 *The Ammonites, strengthened by the Syrians, are overcome by Joab and Abishai.* 15 *Shobach, making a new supply of the Syrians at Helam, is slain by David.*

1. The king. The parallel passage gives his name as Nahash (1 Chron. 19:1). About 50 years previous an Ammonite ruler by the name of Nahash was engaged in a struggle with Saul over the possession of Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 11:1–11). It is possible that the Nahash of the days of Saul was identical with the Nahash of the time of David. A reign of 50 years would be unusual but conceivable. The incidents here recorded could hardly have taken place later than the middle of David's reign, since Solomon, who was probably born within about two years after David's adultery and the Ammonite war (2 Sam. 12:24), had a son a year old when he came to the throne (1 Kings 11:42; 14:21).

2. Shewed kindness. If the Nahash who had been kind to David was the Nahash who had been defeated by Saul (1 Sam. 11:1–11), as seems probable (2 Sam. 10:1, 2), the friendship of Nahash toward David while he was a fugitive from Saul can be easily understood (see PP 714).

3. Hath sent comforters. David had sent his envoys to Ammon with friendly intentions, but his motive was misjudged. Nahash was never a true friend of David, but showed kindness to him simply because he also was an enemy of Saul. The Ammonites hated the Hebrews and despised the worship of the true God. Now they could not understand the true spirit of kindness that prompted David to send his envoys. His best

intentions were misconstrued, and a false coloring was placed upon his motives. The words of the Ammonite princes were untrue and were destined to create trouble.

4. Shaved off. Such an insult could not be lightly accepted by Israel. It is a universal principle among nations that the person of an ambassador must be held inviolate. In heaping such rude indignities on David's envoys, the Ammonites were openly asking for war. For some time they had been alarmed at David's growing strength and had probably by now decided that the day of reckoning had come. But instead of starting hostilities themselves, they may have attempted, by this incident, to pursue a course that would make it appear that they were the ones who were attacked and aggrieved, so that they could claim the sympathy of their neighbors.

Cut off their garments. Appropriately, the envoys of David wore long robes. To cut off the bottom half of these outer robes, which subjected the wearer to shame and ridicule, was as much of an insult as cutting their beards. The outrage to the ambassadors was an insult to the nation they represented.

5. Tarry at Jericho. Beards were considered necessary to dignity; otherwise a clean-shaven face might have solved the problem. The men would reach Jericho immediately after crossing the Jordan from the east. Although Jericho had been destroyed by Joshua, it is probable that a small settlement had again grown up at its famous spring (see on Joshua 6:26). About a century later, during the reign of Ahab, Jericho was built by Hiel the Bethelite (1 Kings 16:34).

6. Hired. According to 1 Chron. 19:6 Hanun paid 1,000 talents of silver to hire horsemen and chariots. The spending of so large a sum of money to secure forces to assist Ammon indicates the grave character of the crisis. For Ammon it meant total war against Israel in an attempt to crush the forces of David and remove once and for all the threat of Hebrew domination of Western Asia.

Beth-rehob. Literally, "house of the street." Called "Rehob" in v. 8. The parallel passage reads "Mesopotamia" (1 Chron. 19:6). Its exact location is not known.

Zoba. See on ch. 8:3.

King Maacah. This should be translated, "the king of Maachah" (see 1 Chron. 19:7). The Hebrew is the same in both passages. For its location see Deut. 3:14; Joshua 12:5. It must have been one of the smaller Syrian states, for it furnished only 1,000 men.

Ish-tob. Literally, "man [or men] of Tob." This place is not mentioned in the parallel record in Chronicles. Jephthah fled to Tob when forced to leave Gilead (Judges 11:3). Its location is not certain; it is possibly northeast of Ramoth-gilead.

Twelve thousand men. The 12,000 men hired from Tob, the 20,000 from Beth-rehob and Zoba, make a total of 32,000 men. Chronicles gives this figure as the total number of chariots, perhaps meaning horsemen (1 Chron. 19:7). In addition to these, Chronicles mentions the "people" of Maacah, but does not give the number. Evidently the 32,000 troops hired were divided among the chariotry, cavalry, and infantry.

7. When David heard. The Ammonites had drawn together a formidable army, determined to crush David. From the east and north came tidings of immense forces approaching the Israelite borders, threatening to bring an end to the kingdom of Israel. David did not wait till his country had been invaded but sent Joab to meet the oncoming hosts.

8. Of the gate. The name of the city where this battle was fought is not given. It probably was Rabbah (or Rabbath-ammon), the Ammonite capital (see on ch. 12:26–29).

Rabbah was near the headwaters of the Jabbok, 23 mi. (36.8 km.) east of the Jordan. The site, now called '*Ammân*', is the capital of the kingdom of Jordan. The hired armies had marched to Medeba (1 Chron. 19:7), 18 mi. (28.8 km.) to the southwest of Rabbah and 23 mi. (36.8 km.) southeast of Jericho. The Ammonites stationed themselves immediately before the city, whereas their allies, divided into separate armies, took their stand some distance from the city, where the ground was more favorable for chariot and cavalry maneuvers.

9. *The front of the battle.* As Joab surveyed the situation, he found himself between the Ammonites drawn up in front of their capital, and their allies to the southwest. Whichever force he might choose to attack, he would find the other force at his rear. There were both advantages and dangers in this disposition of the enemy forces, and the keen eye of the experienced Joab took in the whole situation. He began the battle with the forces of the enemy already divided in two. To prevent being attacked in the rear, he divided his own forces into two divisions, one to attack the Ammonites and the other their allies.

All the choice men. The best of the Israelite troops were chosen for the attack on the Syrians, since with their chariots and cavalry they formed the strongest part of the enemy forces. Joab himself took charge of these troops.

11. *Thou shalt help me.* Fighting close to each other, the forces of Joab and Abishai were in a convenient position to assist each other, which was not the case with the enemy. The two brothers knew that they could depend upon each other, and if the situation became too difficult, each knew that help was immediately available.

12. *Be of good courage.* The situation was one that demanded courage. The existence of the kingdom of Israel was at stake. A determined and powerful enemy was arrayed against them. It took great boldness for Joab to lead his men between the two armies of his enemies, where he might easily be surrounded, and then simultaneously make two attacks.

Of our God. This was the cause of the Lord, Israel was God's people, and Palestine was God's land. This was the land that God had promised to give them. Israel was fighting the battle of the Lord.

14. *Fled they also.* The courage of Ammon was no greater than the strength of its allies. If the Syrians had proved victorious, then the Ammonites would have advanced against Abishai. But when the Syrians fled, their courage fled also, and with it their hopes of victory.

Into the city. The reason for stationing themselves before the gate of the city was probably that they might have available this place of retreat in case of a reverse. Under such conditions and with such a spirit they could not hope to do their best.

Joab returned. It was not possible for Joab to follow up his victory. The Syrians with their horsemen and chariots could readily make their escape, while the Ammonites could find refuge within their city walls. Only a long and costly siege could bring them to terms. For this David seems to have been unprepared.

15. *Gathered themselves.* Joab's victory did not end the conflict. The withdrawal of the forces of Israel to Jerusalem gave the enemy opportunity to renew the war.

16. *Hadarezer.* Or Hadadezer (see on ch. 8:3), king of Zobah (ch. 8:3).

The river. The Euphrates. The Syrian king was chagrined at the defeat his troops had suffered, and now engaged in the struggle on his own account. Previously the Syrians had

entered the conflict only as hired auxiliaries, but now they determined to fight to restore their lost prestige. Hadarezer's influence extended beyond the Euphrates, into territory that later was distinctly Assyrian, and thence he drew additional forces to bolster his strength.

Helam. A city somewhere east of the Jordan (v. 17), but the exact location is not known. It is possibly to be identified with Alima (1 Macc. 5:26), now '*Alma*', in the district of Hauran, east of Galilee, or with Elamun on the Jabbok.

17. Gathered all Israel. This was the most serious crisis of David's reign. Israel was threatened with destruction. Satan was influencing the nations about to make this attack in order that Israel might be destroyed. To meet the situation David took personal command of his forces and mustered all the strength of the nation.

18. Forty thousand horsemen. 1 Chron. 19:18 says "forty thousand footmen." There is no essential contradiction here, for both horsemen and footmen were included among those slain. The writer of Samuel places the emphasis upon the cavalry but Chronicles places it upon the infantry. Both were present and both were essential. It was a crushing defeat, one from which David's foes did not recover during the rest of his reign, nor during Solomon's reign.

Smote Shobach. In those days commanders fought with their men, exposing themselves to the same dangers and often suffering the same fate. Thus Ahab was slain in battle with the Syrians (1 Kings 22:34-37), and Josiah at Megiddo by Necho of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29).

19. Servants to Hadarezer. From this statement some idea may be gained of the great power of Hadarezer (Hadadezer). These vassal kings who had been tributary to Hadarezer now transferred their allegiance to David and paid tribute to him. God had predicted through Abraham (Gen. 15:18) and Moses (Deut. 11:24) that the dominion of Israel would extend to the Euphrates, and these prophecies were now fulfilled. Israel had become a mighty power that was to be reckoned with by the nations about. The countries that had arrayed themselves against Israel had been laid low, and the efforts to crush David served only to enhance his power and prestige. No weapon directed against God or the people of God can prosper. There may be periods of trial and difficulty, but from every trial the cause of God will emerge victorious.

The Syrians feared. David was successful because he trusted in more than human power. Ammon had sought help from Syria, but David had sought help from God. The people of God may think at times that they must rely upon worldly power and influence in order successfully to accomplish their tasks. But often they defeat their own purposes by unholy alliances with the world. When Israel first faced the great coalition of power arrayed against it, many hearts were filled with fear, but when the conflict was over, it was the enemies of Israel who had reason for fear. The Syrians discovered that in endeavoring to assist Ammon against Israel they were engaged in a hopeless struggle, battling against God.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-19PP 714-716

2, 3 PP 714

CHAPTER 11

1 *While Joab besieged Rabbah, David committeth adultery with Bath-sheba. 6 Uriah, sent for by David to cover the adultery, would not go home neither sober nor drunken. 14 He carrieth to Joab the letter of his death. 18 Joab sendeth the news thereof to David. 26 David taketh Bath-sheba to wife.*

1. After the year was expired. Literally, “in the return of the year” (see 1 Kings 20:22, 26). Among the Hebrews the civil year began with the month Tishri in the fall, although the religious year began with Nisan in the spring. Since the autumn was the “going forth” of the year, the spring would be the “return” (see p. 109). The reference here is to the spring, as proved by the next clause.

When kings go forth. The rulers of Western Asia generally started out on their military campaigns in the spring of the year. The winter was unsuited for fighting because of the cold and the rain. Also the roads at that time were well-nigh impassable and supplies of food were not readily available. The Assyrian annals show that almost invariably the spring of the year was chosen for the armies to conduct their campaigns. With the Assyrians these were annual expeditions.

David sent Joab. Joab had spent the winter, or rainy season, at Jerusalem. As soon as the winter was over, David renewed the conflict. During the previous season a crushing defeat had been inflicted on the Syrians, but the Ammonites still retained their power. When attacked by Joab’s forces they had simply retreated within their city walls, whereupon Joab returned to Jerusalem (ch. 10:14). The Ammonites were mainly responsible for this conflict and had hired the Syrians to help them (ch. 10:6). Hence it was necessary for David to deal with them and thus eliminate the Ammonite threat to the security of Israel.

Without the aid of their Syrian allies, the Ammonites alone were no match for the forces of Israel. Since the Syrians had already been subdued, it was only a question of time until the Ammonites, too, would be reduced to submission. David therefore did not consider it essential that he personally take the field against Ammon, but entrusted the conduct of the war to Joab.

Besieged Rabbah. The Ammonites fell an easy prey to the forces of Israel. The country as a whole was quickly reduced, with the exception of Rabbah, the Ammonite capital (ch. 12:26). When Joab’s men were devastating the countryside of Ammon, many of the people took refuge behind the walls of the capital city. Only a long blockade could bring about its final submission. Surrounding the city, Joab began siege operations. The ultimate doom of the city was certain, for there was no hope of relief from without.

David tarried. While Joab carried on the siege of Rabbah, David remained behind at Jerusalem. He was now at the height of his power. His enemies on all sides had been reduced to submission. Only a remnant of the Ammonites remained, and in a short time they too would be completely subdued. Surrounded by the fruits of victory, receiving honor and acclaim from his own people and from the nations about, his coffers overflowing with the tribute that was pouring in from his defeated foes, David lived a life

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Sa 6:3). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

of ease and contentment. The greatness of his success exposed him to his greatest danger. Satan chose this moment to bring upon the king of Israel a temptation that was to cause him deep humiliation and disgrace. David tragically forgot that there was an enemy greater than men. Feeling himself strong and secure against his earthly enemies, intoxicated by his prosperity and success, while receiving the plaudits of men, Israel's honored hero and saint was thrown off his guard. Imperceptibly the inner defenses of his soul had weakened, until he yielded to a temptation that transformed him into a shameless sinner.

2. In an eveningtide. Evening began in the midafternoon. David was probably arising from his midday siesta. The palace roof, being, presumably, higher than the neighboring houses, provided a view of their courtyards.

3. Enquired after the woman. When the temptation arose, David did not resist it, but descended from the roof with the determination to bring the evil thoughts of his heart into action. It was the tempter who had suggested the sin, and David should have turned him aside with a "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mark 8:33). Instead, he listened to the seducer, and obeyed the voice of Satan instead of the voice of God. If David had paused for a moment, if he had turned his thoughts upward to heaven to pray, if he had allowed his mind to engage itself with the responsibilities of his kingly office or given himself to the conduct of the affairs of state, the spell of the enemy would have been broken. The conduct of David in this instance is a sad commentary on what a most godly man may become when he forsakes the Lord, even for a moment. The experience is recorded as a lesson to others who might also be tempted. It is not God's plan to cover up or excuse sin, even on the part of the greatest heroes or saints. David's sin was followed by deep repentance and divine forgiveness; nevertheless its fruitage of evil overclouded all the remaining years of his life.

Eliam. Given as Ammiel in 1 Chron. 3:5. Eliam and Ammiel are actually the same name, with the two parts of the name transposed, as is frequently the case in Scripture. Compare Hananiah (1 Chron. 3:19) and Joanna (Luke 3:27), Jehoahaz and Ahaziah (2 Chron. 21:17; cf. 2 Chron. 22:1). If this Eliam is the same as the one mentioned in 2 Sam. 23:34, then Bath-sheba's father was one of David's "mighty men" at arms, and Bath-sheba was the granddaughter of Ahithophel, the well-known counselor of David and Absalom (2 Sam. 15:12, 31).

Uriah the Hittite. The name of Uriah, like that of Eliam, appears in the list of David's greatest heroes (ch. 23:39). Everything indicates that Uriah was a brave soldier and a man of upright character. The Hittites as a people were warlike and brave. David's offense was particularly grievous since Bath-sheba was a married woman and her husband was one of David's most noble and trusted officers, a man of an alien race who had been brought in contact with the religion of the true God.

4. Took her. There is no indication that David's messengers took Bath-sheba by force. Bath-sheba was beautiful, and she was not beyond temptation. Possibly she was flattered by the overtures made to her by the king, and yielded herself to David without resistance.

She was purified. See Lev. 15:19, 28.

5. Sent and told David. The information was necessary both for her own and David's safety and for the king's honor. Both parties in the case of adultery were to be punished by death (Lev. 20:10); hence to escape the penalty, the guilty would naturally seek to

conceal the sin. Bath-sheba turned to David for help. If Uriah discovered that his wife was with child by David, he might avenge himself by taking the lives of both David and Bath-sheba, or by inciting the nation to revolt because of such a disgraceful deed on the part of the king.

6. *Send me Uriah.* David's sin brought him into desperate straits. Concealment by deceit seemed to offer a hope of escape. Instead of humbly confessing his sin and relying upon divine mercy and guidance, David took matters into his own hand, only to find that he was adding sin to sin, and was constantly bringing himself into greater difficulties.

7. *How Joab did.* As an important and trusted officer, Uriah would be well acquainted with the course of the war. David now sent for him as if to inquire for details concerning the course of the siege, and particularly concerning the conduct of Joab, as if he were desirous of some confidential report regarding the commander in chief. The degrading falsehood and dissimulation to which David stooped in the hope of concealing his sin reveals the results of a course of evil.

8. *Go down to thy house.* Go now to your home, refresh yourself after the journey, relax, and take your ease (see Gen. 18:4; 19:2). By sending Uriah to his wife, David evidently planned to deceive him into the belief that the child begotten in adultery was his own.

A mess of meat. Heb. *maš'eth*, literally, "a portion," here probably of food. The same term is employed for the "messes" Joseph set before his brethren (Gen. 43:34). The gift sent by David was obviously to induce in Uriah a feeling of happiness and contentment and to do its part toward ensuring the accomplishment of David's purpose.

9. *Slept at the door.* Probably in the guardroom at the entrance to the palace, with the troops who were stationed there (see 1 Kings 14:27, 28). There is no evidence that Uriah had suspicions of his wife's misconduct with David. He declared his course to be that of a loyal, upright, conscientious soldier who wished to do what was scrupulously right under the circumstances.

11. *The ark.* Some commentators believe that the statement here indicates that the ark was at this time with the army in its siege of Rabbah. In all probability, however, Uriah was simply referring to the fact that the ark was in a tent (ch. 7:2, 6) rather than in a permanent abode.

Israel, and Judah. These two divisions of the nation were already, to a degree, recognized and were hostile to each other during the early part of David's reign.

Shall I then go? Uriah had just come from the battle front, where conditions were vastly different from those at home. Before Rabbah the men of Israel were encamped in the open field, suffering the privations of war, living a rigorous life, and subsisting on an army diet. Having just left his friends who were forced to live under those severe conditions, Uriah evidently did not wish to partake of the comforts and delights of life while his compatriots were suffering and dying.

As thou livest. Uriah took an oath that he would not go home. It seems strange that he would make an issue of such a point in opposition to the king. It was either perfervid loyalty and patriotism or a suspicion of the truth.

12. *Tarry here.* David thought that after a little extra time, Uriah's scruples would no longer restrain him, and he would be willing to return to the comforts of his home.

13. Made him drunk. David was reduced to desperate straits in resorting to this means to induce Uriah to go to his home. But so strong was Uriah's resolve that, intoxicated as he was, he still would not return to his home, but slept with the soldiers.

14. Wrote a letter. Every effort of David to conceal his sin proved of no avail. At length, in his desperation he decided to resort to murder in order that the mouth of Uriah might be stopped and he himself might not be exposed. David had placed himself in the hand of Satan, who now was determined to bring Israel's new king to utter ruin and destruction, as he had Saul. Apparently David's sole desire was to avoid disgrace before the nation. He would not even stop short of murder in order to conceal his guilt. With Uriah dead, Bath-sheba could be brought into the palace as another of David's wives, and the king's adultery would not be known.

By the hand of Uriah. So low had David sunk that he made his trusted officer the bearer of his own death warrant. The valor of Uriah was to pay the price for the king's transgression.

17. Died. Uriah approached one of the city gates (v. 23) whence the defenders made a sudden sally, slaying not only Uriah but a number of the men who were with him.

18. Then Joab sent. The main object was, of course, to inform David that his orders had been carried out and that Uriah was dead.

20. King's wrath. Joab was acquainted with David and knew that the king would be displeased when told of some reverse. David, as a wise commander, demanded prudence from those under him carrying responsibilities, and he held them accountable for any mistakes or errors in judgment. Only thus could he continue successfully to carry out his responsibilities as king and secure the greatest efficiency from his men.

21. Who smote Abimelech? Abimelech had been foolish enough to approach so close to a tower that he was killed by a piece of millstone thrown by a woman (Judges 9:53). Joab anticipated that he too would be charged with folly for permitting his men to approach so close to the wall as to come within reach of the defenders.

Jerubbesheth. Jerubbaal, or Gideon (Judges 6:32; see on 2 Sam. 2:8; 9:6).

Uriah the Hittite. Joab knew that this was the news that David was anxious to hear and that it would appease David's possible wrath, atoning for any bad military move that Joab might have made.

23. The men prevailed. This reverse was one for which there was no excuse. It was murder, pure and simple, chargeable first to the king and next to Joab, who carried out David's orders. Implicit obedience to the orders of superiors is not a virtue when it leads to disobedience of the laws of God. If Joab had been a truly upright man, willing to give a word of honest remonstrance when ordered to commit so base a crime, Uriah and his men need not have been sent to their untimely deaths. But David had as his commander in chief a man with apparently few conscientious scruples, a man willing to become a party to foul murder to please his king.

The entering of the gate. This detail casts some light on the nature of the incident that brought about the death of Uriah. The city gate, being an especially important and vulnerable point, would be the most strongly defended. When Uriah and his men made their approach to the gate, the Ammonites sent out a body of men against them.

24. Shot from off the wall. Uriah and his men probably approached so close to the wall that they became the target not only of the arrows of the archers but of any type of missile that might be hurled against them (see v. 21). In making such an approach the

Israelites would of course have known exactly what to expect, and in thus exposing themselves to danger they could justly be accused of carelessness.

25. *Displease thee.* Under normal circumstances the loss of so valiant and important a man as Uriah would be keenly felt by both Joab and David. In bringing about the death of Uriah, Joab had only carried out David's orders and he knew that he would have the approbation of the king. David was now letting him know that he was well pleased with his action and was conveying to him his thanks.

More strong. David made it appear that he feared Joab would be disheartened by the loss of Uriah, and instead of carrying on the siege with strength and vigor, might become unduly cautious and thus prolong hostilities. The messenger on his return was to encourage Joab, letting him know that David approved of the risks he was taking. The whole thing was only a sham to cover up David's part in the death of Uriah.

26. *She mourned.* These words refer to the customary formal mourning observed in Oriental lands. The usual period was seven days (Gen. 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13).

27. *Fetches her.* As soon as the period of mourning was over David sent for Bath-sheba, that she might become his wife. There is no evidence of any reluctance on her part to join the king's harem.

Displeased the Lord. A great change had come over David. He was not the same David who, as a fugitive from Saul, refused to lift up his hand against "the Lord's anointed" (1 Sam. 24:6, 10). Sin had seared his conscience as he had gone on from adultery to deceit and murder, and it now appears that he even hoped to be allowed to reap the reward of his iniquities without rebuke from God. But God had seen all.

Satan endeavors to conceal from men the terrible results of transgression, making them believe that sin will bring increased happiness and greater rewards. Thus he beguiled Eve, and thus he has seduced men through all the ages. But the Lord in His kindness allows men to see that the results of sin are not increased prosperity and happiness, but misery, woe, and death. His restraining hand would be withdrawn from David, and the king would be permitted to taste the bitter fruits of sin. He would learn to know that the pathway to true happiness could not be found in disobedience. Those who seek their own pleasure by following a path that displeases the Lord, may be certain that they will ultimately reap disappointment, bitterness, and woe.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–27PP 717–720; Ed 48, 49

2–5PP 718

14, 15 1T 255

15, 19–21PP 719

25, 27 PP 720

27 PP 723

CHAPTER 12

1 *Nathan's parable of the ewe lamb causeth David to be his own judge. 7 David, reproveth by Nathan, confesseth his sin, and is pardoned. 15 David mourneth and prayeth for the child, while it lived. 24 Solomon is born, and named Jedidiah. 26 David taketh Rabbah, and tortureth the people thereof.*

1. *Sent Nathan.* As time went on David's sin came out into the open. It became known that David himself was the father of the child that was born to Bath-sheba, and suspicions arose that it was he who had brought about the death of Uriah (see PP 720).

David was not only the civil ruler of his people but also “the Lord’s anointed,” the head of the theocracy, the leader of God’s chosen people, and the one who was to uphold and enforce the law of the Lord. David by his sin had brought reproach and dishonor upon the name of the Lord. God therefore sent Nathan to David to deliver the message of divine rebuke, in an attempt to bring the erring king to a realization of the magnitude of his crime and to repentance.

There were two men. The allegory was skillfully designed to arouse David’s indignation and thus cause him to pass sentence upon the offense he had committed. The delivery of the message required skill and courage. Unless the rebuke went home to the heart of the king, it might bring about the death of the reprover.

Ewe lamb. The details are skillfully presented to create sympathy for the owner of the one ewe lamb and indignation toward the heartless individual who would stoop so low as to take advantage of his neighbor. In order that it might be effective, the narrative was made most realistic. Homes where lambs are treated with much affection are still found in Syria today.

5. Greatly kindled. In spite of his sin, David retained an innate sense of justice, and gave his verdict without delay. With a solemn oath he pronounced sentence against the man. What he had actually done was to sentence himself to death.

6. Fourfold. This was in accord with the law of Moses (Ex. 22:1; cf. Luke 19:8). Some manuscripts of the LXX here have “sevenfold,” in accord with Prov. 6:31.

7. Thou art the man. David the judge had found David the transgressor worthy of death. He could not go against his own judgment, because it was he himself who had pronounced the sentence. It would be useless to plead that the facts as presented were not in accord with the crime committed. Actually the deed of which David was guilty was far worse than the deed he had pronounced worthy of death.

David was without excuse. He knew that he was in the wrong and that the sentence pronounced was just. In spite of the magnitude of his crime, his conscience was not yet dead. He had succeeded for a time in hiding his crime from the eyes of men, but he did not succeed in hiding it from God. Through a chain of circumstances the Lord allowed him to catch a glimpse of the terrible nature of the crime he had committed and to pronounce a just sentence against himself. The unflinching application of the parable to the king portrays the holy boldness and faithfulness of God’s prophet. This plain-spoken rebuke might well have cost Nathan his life, but he did not waver in performing his duty.

The boldness and suddenness of Nathan’s words brought a shock to David that woke him from the evil spell that his crimes had cast upon him. David had been essentially a good man, one who endeavored to obey the Lord. But he had yielded to temptation, and in the attempt to cover up his guilt had become ever more deeply entangled in a net of evil. For a time his senses had seemed to be stupefied by a delirium of power, prosperity, and perfidy. Now he was suddenly brought back to his senses.

8. Thy master’s wives. Nathan here refers to the Oriental custom that gave to a new king the harem of his predecessor. The Bible mentions only one wife of Saul (1 Sam. 14:50), and one concubine (2 Sam. 3:7), who was taken by Abner. The record does not state that David actually took to himself any woman who had ever belonged to Saul, but at least custom permitted him to, and God for the time being did not interfere with the custom (see Matt. 19:4–9; see on Deut. 14:26).

9. Despised the commandment. Upon David as the divinely appointed ruler of Israel rested the responsibility to uphold God's law and to teach the nation to obey its precepts. By his example David had shown contempt for God's law and had encouraged his people to disregard its precepts. The king who should have been a terror to the doers of iniquity had encouraged them in their course of evil. He had proved himself unfaithful to the solemn responsibilities that God had placed upon him.

Thou hast killed Uriah. By ordering the death of Uriah by the hand of the Ammonites, David was as guilty of the blood of his trusted officer as if he had performed the slaying with his own sword. God Himself placed upon David the accusation of murder, and from this charge there was no escape.

Taken his wife. David had no right to Bath-sheba. She was the lawful wife of Uriah. In slaying Uriah and then taking his wife, David committed an offense that throughout the ages has given enemies of the Lord the opportunity to blaspheme and reproach God's holy name.

10. Shall never depart. As David had dealt unto others, so now he himself was to receive. The floodgates of evil that David had opened would engulf his posterity in misery and woe.

Despised me. David's crime consisted not only in the evil he had done to Uriah but also in the wrong he had committed against God. The Lord had placed David upon his throne and promised that the kingdom would be given to him and his seed forever, yet in spite of all this David had been guilty of despising the One who had been so good to him.

11. Raise up evil. These words must not be taken to mean that God would be the instigator or the originator of the evil here predicted (see PP 728, 739). In the crime of Amnon against his sister Tamar (ch. 13) and in the rebellion of Absalom (chs. 15 to 19) David was to taste somewhat of the bitter fruitage of his sin and the results of his inability to control or inspire his sons.

Unto thy neighbour. See ch. 16:22. This was another prediction of the results of David's sin. God is here, as frequently, presented as doing that which He does not restrain.

12. Before all Israel. See ch. 16:22. The punishment was to be as open as the sin had been secret.

13. I have sinned. The context shows that these words were spoken sincerely. Nathan's rebuke had gone straight to his heart, and David humbly confessed himself a sinner. In the 51st psalm, written at this time, David not only acknowledged his sin and asked for forgiveness but prayed God to create in him a clean heart and renew a right spirit within him (Ps. 51:2, 3, 10). The 32d psalm likewise may have originated during this crisis (see PP 724).

Put away thy sin. These words may be of encouragement to every sinner, for they show that the Lord is willing to forgive, no matter how great the sin. Few have been guilty of any baser sin, any greater ingratitude, any more intense or brutal selfishness than was David in his murder of Uriah. Yet when he sincerely acknowledged his sin the Lord readily granted forgiveness and restored him to divine favor. At the same time a course such as David pursued is fraught with extreme danger. Repentance involves a change in the basic attitude of the sinner toward his sin. Men generally sin because they love to. This makes it difficult for them to be sorry for a sin they deliberately planned and purposely executed. Only when they are willing to make a complete change in their

attitudes and conduct and by the help of God to root out the evil in their nature that caused their transgression will they be able to find repentance. Any man interested only in receiving forgiveness for past transgression while planning to repeat his sin, is insincere and seeks forgiveness in vain.

14. To blaspheme. Although the Lord forgave David for his sin, that did not bring an end to its influences for evil. Many a skeptic, pointing to this experience, has blasphemed the name of God and cast reproach upon the church.

Shall surely die. David had given the judgment that “the man that hath done this thing shall surely die” (v. 5). By his own sentence David was the one who should die. But instead, God decreed that the child of his sin should die (see PP 722). To David the death of the child would be a far greater punishment than his own death. As a result of the bitter experience he would pass through, David would be brought to a full measure of repentance and conversion.

16. Besought God. Even after He has pronounced judgment God has sometimes seen fit to turn aside the penalty in response to sincere repentance and earnest petitions to Him (Ex. 32:9–14; cf. Jonah 3:4–10). David knew that God was “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth” (Ex. 34:6). He therefore pleaded earnestly for forgiveness and for the life of the child. However, this does not imply that he refused submission to the divine will. He simply hoped that God’s mercy might spare the child.

20. Then David arose. The death of the child was God’s solemn answer to the earnest entreaty of the father. God did not give a favorable answer to David’s petitions, but the king was humbly submissive to the divine will. When Heaven’s answer is contrary to our plea we must remember that God knows best, and that for some reason, often unknown to us, He sees that it is not best to extend the life of the one who is sick.

21. What thing is this? David’s conduct was strange in the eyes of his servants. They expected to find his deepest expression of grief at the death of the child, but he arose from his fasting and asked for bread.

23. Wherefore should I fast? These words portray David’s resignation to the will of God, and his understanding of the state of the dead. After the child had died, there was nothing further he could do about the matter, and he humbly accepted the inevitable.

I shall go to him. The Hebrews spoke figuratively of the dead sleeping together in a realm called *she’ol*. This word is translated both “grave” and “hell” in the KJV. The rendering “hell” is unfortunate, for *she’ol* has nothing to do with torture or consciousness. The one who died was sometimes represented as going to sleep with his fathers (2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kings 1:21; 2:10), or as being gathered to his fathers (2 Kings 22:20). David meant that he would join his son in death, but that his son would not return to the land of the living.

24. Solomon. The name probably means “peaceable.” Solomon was to succeed to the kingdom; thus he was to be a progenitor of the Messiah. David’s life had been one of war, Solomon’s was to be one of peace.

25. Jedidiah. Literally, “beloved of Jehovah.” David had sinned, but his sin had been forgiven. God still loved him, and He loved the child that was born to Bath-sheba.

26. Against Rabbah. The account of Joab’s siege of Rabbah (ch. 11:1) had been interrupted by the account of David’s experience with Bath-sheba. Now the account of

the siege of Ammon's capital city is resumed. The narrative of David's adultery with Bath-sheba and the murder of Uriah (2 Sam. 11:2 to 12:25) is not in Chronicles.

27. *The city of waters.* Rabbah was situated in the narrow valley of the upper Jabbok River. The citadel was on a cliff, evidently a walled city apart from the lower town. This lower town was called "the city of waters," probably because of the spring that there flowed into the river. When this lower city was taken by Joab, the loss of the water supply made it impossible for the defenders to hold the upper city long.

In NT times this city was called Philadelphia (not to be confused with the Asia Minor city by that name, Rev. 1:11). The modern name is '*Ammân*, the capital of Transjordan after World War I, and later the capital of the new kingdom of Jordan.

28. *Encamp against the city.* The siege of Rabbah was practically over. The most important part of the city had already fallen, and it was evident that the rest of the city would soon be in Israelite hands. Joab graciously extended the invitation to David to bring the rest of the forces of Israel, that the king might take the city in person and have the glory of its capture.

After my name. When David took Jerusalem it was given the name "city of David" (ch. 5:7, 9). It seems that Joab planned that Rabbah, after its capture, should receive, not his name, but David's.

29. *All the people.* Joab had proposed a general muster of all the people for the capture of Rabbah (v. 28). David carried out this proposal and now appeared in person for the final capture of the city. Since the fall of the city was certain, a full muster of the national strength seems to have been prompted by choice rather than necessity.

30. *Their king's crown.* The same Hebrew consonants that here form the words "their king" also form the name Malcham (or Milcom), the national god of the Ammonites (Zeph. 1:5). Some thus believe that the crown taken by David was that of the idol rather than of the king, since the crown would seem to be too heavy to be worn by a man. A talent is about 75 lb. (34 kg.).

Precious stones. Literally, "a stone of preciousness."

Set on David's head. The grammar of this passage permits us to conclude that either the crown or the precious stone was set on David's head. A crown of such weight could not have been worn for any length of time, nor would it be worn on ordinary occasions. The crown may have been placed, for a moment, on David's head as a token of triumph, or the stone may have been taken from the crown and set in David's crown. In either case the act signified David's sovereignty over the Ammonites.

31. *Put them under saws.* That is, the people were appointed to labor with saws and other implements. By the change of one letter in the verb the parallel passage reads, "he sawed them with saws" (1 Chron. 20:3). Perhaps the same verb as is used in Samuel was intended. This may be a copyist's error. Some have thought that David tortured the Ammonite prisoners (see on 1 Chron. 20:3). Such cruelties would be in accord with the common customs of the time, but not with David's character.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-31PP 720-726

1-12PP 721

5, 6 PP 727

7 GW 150; PK 141; 2T 688; 4T 15

9, 10 PP 723

11, 12 PP 739
13 SC 28; 4T 15; 5T 639
13, 14, 17 PP 722
25 PK 51

CHAPTER 13

1 *Amnon loving Tamar, by Jonadab's counsel feigning himself sick, ravisheth her.* 15 *He hateth her, and shamefully turneth her away.* 19 *Absalom entertaineth her, and concealeth his purpose.* 23 *At a sheepshearing, among all the king's sons, he killeth Amnon.* 30 *David grieving at the news is comforted by Jonadab.* 37 *Absalom flieth to Talmai at Geshur.*

1. *It came to pass.* The series of narratives that follow (chs. 13 to 21) is an account of misfortunes that overtook David after his sin. Chronicles makes no mention of these calamities, as that record also fails to mention David's sin. After his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah, David was a changed man. He had lost much of his former confidence in himself; nor was he longer complete master of his realm. The people no longer had implicit confidence, and thus were slow to listen to his admonitions concerning the rewards of righteousness or the evils of transgression. When he saw others do the things for which he had set the example, it was difficult to reprove them. His own sons refused to obey him and no longer respected his counsel. Where before he had been strong and courageous, he now became weak and hesitant. A sense of shame constantly hung over him. The following chapters portray the course of events that in part, at least, were consequent upon David's transgression.

A fair sister. Literally, "a beautiful sister." Absalom and his sister Tamar were the children of Maacah, who was the daughter of the king of Geshur, and the birth of Absalom took place while David reigned at Hebron (ch. 3:3). Amnon was David's firstborn, the son of "Ahinoam the Jezreelitess" (ch. 3:2). Since it appears that these sons were now in their young manhood, the events here related must have taken place about the middle of David's reign of 40 years.

2. *Fell sick.* This narrative is included in the Sacred Scriptures for the purpose of demonstrating what tragic consequences may come to the household of a man of God who has strayed from the pathway of right and yielded to the tempter. The defects of David's children were in part attributable to his defects.

Thought it hard. He thought it difficult, under the circumstances, to do to her according to his desires. Having been accustomed to self-gratification and to carrying out his every desire, Amnon actually fretted himself sick because of his inability to gratify his wishes in regard to Tamar.

3. *A friend.* The friendship was evil and led to Amnon's ruin. Had Amnon chosen his companions more wisely he might, in the crisis, have had the help of a real friend to give sound and saving counsel.

Very subtil. Jonadab was a crafty man who, by fair means or foul, would secure his ends.

5. *Make thyself sick.* That is, pretend to be ill. In one sense Amnon had already fallen sick (v. 2). His sickness was the result of ungoverned and ungratified passion. In this instance he would feign illness of a different character, that would make its appeal to the sympathies of the king.

At her hand. David as a wise and discerning father must have understood somewhat of the nature of his son. There is, however, nothing in the record to suggest that he discerned Amnon's full intentions, or he would not have acceded to his wishes. But he should have been alert enough and sufficiently courageous not to permit Tamar to leave her own quarters and to enter Amnon's establishment, where such serious consequences might follow.

7. Go now. It was a seemingly innocent command, but in issuing this order David was sending his daughter to shame and his son to death.

8. So Tamar went. Tamar was induced to leave the security of her own quarters for the apartment of Amnon, where he would have her at his mercy.

10. Into the chamber. When, like a fretful invalid, Amnon refused to eat, Tamar herself brought the food into his bedroom.

12. No such thing. See Gen. 34:7. Without anyone else in the house, Tamar had no one to aid her in her attempts to resist her brother's evil and determined purpose. She first tried to reason with him, speaking of the sinfulness of such an act and of its folly.

13. Cause my shame to go. Tamar tried to bring Amnon to his senses by pointing out that in doing such a deed he would disgrace her, the king's daughter and his sister, for life. If he had any regard for her, certainly he would not wish to bring such a humiliation upon her and upon the king's household.

As for thee. Tamar thought of the consequences not only to herself but also to Amnon. By performing such an act he would make a fool of himself, reducing himself to shame and contempt throughout the land. Tamar thought clearly and reasoned logically.

Speak unto the king. Seeing that she was making no headway by reasoning with her determined brother, Tamar began to temporize. What was necessary now was to get out of his clutches, and this was evidently her last resort.

14. Would not hearken. Amnon was utterly selfish, lustful, and determined to have his own way regardless of consequences. He could not be reasoned with. The requirements of God, the virtue of his sister, and the honor of his own name meant nothing to him. For these characteristics David was in part to blame. He avoided bringing his children to account when they did wrong, and permitted them to have their own way. Now they were beyond reason and restraint.

15. Amnon hated her. The result was typical. Amnon was moved, not by love, but by passion, and now that his animal lusts were gratified, he had no further regard for his sister, whom he had so cruelly wronged.

16. No cause. There was no reason for Amnon to demand his sister's departure. Having wronged her, the least he could do was to protect her and comfort her. In casting her out he was compounding a felony.

Would not hearken. See v. 14. Amnon had not been brought up to hearken to the voice of reason, conscience, or God. Tamar's remonstrance meant nothing to him.

18. A garment of divers colours. She wore a long robe with sleeves, as was the custom for virgins of the royal household. The point is mentioned in order to show that Tamar must have been recognized as a royal virgin.

19. Rent her garment. This was probably done immediately. Tamar made no attempt to cover up the shame that had come upon her. She was a virtuous young woman whose conduct was entirely above reproach. As she left the apartment of Amnon she gave vigorous evidence of the deep grief she experienced within (see Esther 4:1; 2 Kings 5:8).

Thus she prevented Amnon from inventing the tale that she had been guilty of misconduct toward him and for this reason had been expelled from his presence. Tamar was evidently entirely sincere, her actions betokening the keen indignation and grief that were hers. Had she kept quiet she might have been considered a party to the crime.

20. *Been with thee?* Members of the royal household must have been acquainted with the shortcomings of Amnon, and apparently Absalom immediately sensed what had taken place.

Hold now thy peace. This counsel is in keeping with the deeply revengeful spirit of Absalom. The wrong that had been done to Tamar demanded immediate punishment. The shame that she had suffered was generally known, for her behavior on leaving Amnon's apartment prevented any hope of concealment. Nothing good was to be gained by counseling delay. If Absalom had himself been the man he should have been, he would have taken the matter immediately in hand and would not have rested until the wrong done to his sister had been righted. But instead of seeking redress by legal means he plotted revenge.

Desolate. Tamar had been shamed and then deserted, and she continued to abide in the home of her brother, unmarried and unhappy in the memory of her disgrace.

21. *Was very wroth.* David indeed was angry when he heard of this shameful act on the part of his son, but apparently because of the remembrance of his own misconduct he failed to see that justice was done. He felt that his hands were tied by his sin, and as a result he manifested toward his children a leniency that encouraged misconduct such as this. Earlier in life, in conscious integrity and unencumbered by the snares in which he later became entangled, he probably would have administered swift judgment. But now all he did was to manifest a display of wrath and allow the offender to go unpunished.

22. *Neither good nor bad.* Outwardly Absalom revealed no trace of his inner feelings. Although burning with hatred and revenge he contrived to maintain a calm exterior, while all the time plotting his brother's death. It would have been far better for all concerned if he had gone immediately to seek justice through the proper legal channels.

23. *Absalom had sheepshearers.* Sheepshearing was then, and still is, a time of feasting and rejoicing (see 1 Sam. 25:2, 8).

Baal-hazor. This place has been identified with *Jebel el-‘Aşûr*, 4 1/2 mi. (7.2 km.) northeast of Bethel and 14 1/4 mi. (22.8 km.) from Jerusalem.

All the king's sons. This invitation of course included Amnon, for the real purpose of Absalom in giving the feast was to secure the opportunity of seizing him.

24. *Came to the king.* Absalom's deep guile is revealed in this invitation to David. He hardly expected his father to come, but by urging him to do so, he would help to allay suspicion and would thus encourage the attendance of Amnon.

25. *Chargeable unto thee.* David declined the invitation on the ground that the attendance of so many might be burdensome to Absalom.

Pressed him. By continuing to urge his father's attendance, Absalom effectively disguised his real purpose and succeeded in securing David's blessing on the festivities. Everything now appeared above suspicion.

26. *Go with us.* David's sons were now grown, but evidently the father still continued to exercise some measure of control over their activities. Amnon was particularly invited, since he was the eldest son and the heir apparent, who could represent his father at the feast.

Why should he? The question suggests that David may have had some misgivings.

27. Pressed him. By continued urging Absalom finally broke down his father's resistance and secured his consent that not only Amnon but all the princes (v. 29) be permitted to attend the feast.

28. Smite Amnon. At this time David's second son, Chileab (ch. 3:3), was possibly already dead, for we hear nothing of him in the record. If so, the death of Amnon would thus make Absalom the next in line for the throne (see ch. 3:2, 3). Perhaps Absalom's servants thought that his orders for the death of Amnon were aimed at securing his own succession to the throne.

29. His mule. David apparently rode upon a mule (1 Kings 1:33, 38), and so also did Absalom (2 Sam. 18:9). Thus the mule seems to have been the animal that at this time was ridden by persons of distinction.

Fled. When Amnon was slain, David's other sons no doubt feared that this was only the beginning of a general massacre in which they too would be victims.

30. Tidings came to David. The rumor that came to David was false. Matters like these have a way of growing as they are carried from one person to another.

31. Tare his garments. Exaggerated as the report was, David accepted it as true. His very hesitancy in agreeing to have his sons attend the feast suggests that he had some misgivings. In fact he consented only after urgings (see vs. 26, 27), and then probably against his better judgment. Now he believed that his worst fears had been realized and that a general massacre of all the royal princes had taken place.

32. Jonadab. Jonadab was the "very subtil man" who had given the evil advice that resulted in Tamar's seduction (vs. 3–5). As a friend of Amnon he was aware of the danger to which his companion was exposed. He knew that the day would come when Tamar's brother would seek revenge. Jonadab gave to David his own opinion of what had taken place, that only Amnon had been slain.

33. To his heart. The death of Amnon was a severe enough blow, but it was a small matter compared with the reported death of all the sons of David. David had been at fault in not punishing Amnon for his crime against his sister. Because of this failure of duty, the Lord allowed circumstances to follow their own course. Restraints were removed from the forces of evil, and a train of events followed that punished Amnon for his crime (see PP 728).

34. Absalom fled. Absalom no doubt fled immediately after the slaying of Amnon, but the writer has failed to mention that fact till now. A number of events were going on simultaneously, but the writer could relate them only one at a time. The flight of the princes probably took place at the same time as did the flight of Absalom, with the princes making their way back to the palace and Absalom fleeing in another direction. The LXX has the following addition to this verse, "in the descent: and the watchman came and told the king, and said, I have seen men by the way of Oronen, by the side of the mountain."

35. As thy servant said. When Jonadab had previously told David that only Amnon was dead (v. 32) he was evidently speaking, not from a knowledge of the facts, but from a shrewd surmise. Seeing the princes approaching, he knew that he was right, and did not hesitate mentioning this to David.

37. Talmi. The father of Maacah, Absalom's mother (ch. 3:3). Absalom knew that his grandfather would grant him sanctuary, whereas his life would not be safe if he remained in Israel.

Mourned for his son. There is some question as to whether this refers to Amnon or Absalom. It was probably Amnon. David had a tender heart and deeply grieved over the death of his son.

38. So Absalom fled. This is the third time this fact is mentioned, but each repetition is for the purpose of introducing some new detail. In v. 34 the simple fact is stated that Absalom had fled. In v. 37 the locality of his flight is given (see Absalom's Flight and Usurpation of the Kingdom), and here its duration.

39. The soul of. These words are not in the Hebrew and are here inserted because the verb is feminine and David could not properly be the subject. The LXX has "the spirit of." But if David grieved for Absalom, constantly longing for his return, why did he not bring him back? Though David loved his son, he obviously felt it necessary as a lesson both to Absalom and to the people that at least displeasure at Absalom's deed be shown (cf. PP 729).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–39 PP 727, 728

30, 31, 36, 37 PP 727

39 GC 537, 539

CHAPTER 14

1 *Joab, suborning a widow of Tekoah, by a parable to incline the king's heart to fetch home Absalom, bringeth him to Jerusalem. 25 Absalom's beauty, hair, and children. 28 After two years, Absalom by Joab is brought into the king's presence.*

1. Toward Absalom. The Hebrew preposition here translated "toward" may also mean "against." Some believe that the rendering "against" is the intent of the passage, thus making David feel hostile toward his son because of the murder of Amnon. However, see on ch. 13:39. The attitude on the part of David gave rise to Absalom's alienation from his father (see PP 728). Anxious to return, and bitter over the fact that he was for so long shut away from the affairs of the kingdom he expected would be his at his father's death, Absalom gave himself over to traitorous plots. It was an unhealthy situation, and Joab set out to correct it.

2. Tekoah. A village about 5 mi. south of Bethlehem, best known as the home of the prophet Amos (Amos 1:1). Since it was near to Bethlehem, the ancestral home of Joab, he may have had personal knowledge of this woman whom he planned to use for carrying out his purpose. Tekoah is identified with the modern *Teqû'*.

Feign thyself. It was Joab who contrived the parable and put the words in the woman's mouth, but it would require great skill to enact the drama before the king.

3. Come to the king. The king was the supreme judge of the land, and accessible to all his subjects. He was expected to assist them in their difficulties.

5. A widow woman. The case was sufficiently unlike that of David so that her story created no suspicion. There were certain basic features in the narrative that were to settle the issue in the mind of David, and on those the emphasis would be placed.

6. Two sons. Corresponding to Amnon and Absalom.

7. Against thine handmaid. The parable here differs purposely from the actual facts so as not to create suspicion. In the case of David it was he who was alienated from

Absalom and who refused to grant him permission to return. David believed that because of Absalom's guilt in shedding his brother's blood he could not grant him permission to return. In the parable it was the family, not the mother, who were insisting that the murderer be held guilty.

The heir also. There is probably a covert allusion here to Absalom as the heir to David's throne.

8. *Give charge.* The woman had gained her point, and David made the promise that her son would be protected.

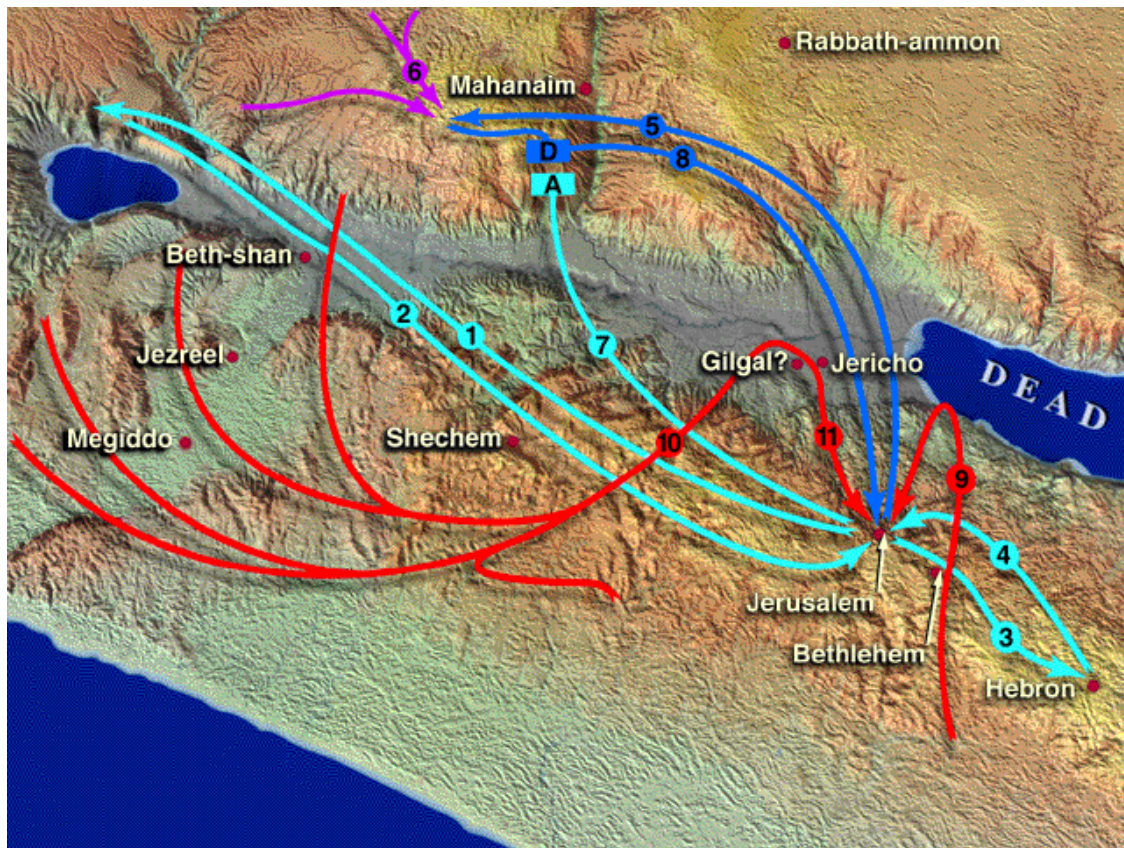
9. *The iniquity be on me.* Technically the murderer was guilty, but because of the circumstances David was granting him a reprieve. The woman had gained her point but wished to prolong the discussion so as to make David commit himself further. To do this, she asked that if there were any blood guilt, it be permitted to rest on her and not on David and his throne. In doing this she skillfully drew David into the position where he himself would assume the responsibility. Thus far he had simply put her off with a promise without specifically involving himself.

10. *Whosoever saith ought.* The cunning words of the woman had drawn from David the promise that he would assume the role of her protector. He was inadvertently allowing himself to be drawn into a position from which it would be difficult to withdraw.

Absalom's Flight and Usurpation of the Kingdom

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⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Sa 11:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



11. Let the king remember. Thus far the woman had been entirely successful, but she wished to carry the matter still further. David's highest regard was for God, and she would not cease until he had committed himself in the presence of God.

As the Lord liveth. With a solemn oath David swore that the life of the son would be protected. He had now committed himself in such a way that he could not withdraw.

12. The woman said. Thus far she had been dealing with a hypothetical case that appeared to concern herself and her son. Having craftily led David on to give a verdict in that case, she now proceeded to apply the matter to Absalom. Her first words were cautious and still somewhat obscure, but she was beginning to drive home to David the matter of his dealings with Absalom.

13. Wherefore then? Since David had followed such a course in this instance, what reason did he have for not following it in another? If he had done right in granting a reprieve to her son, who was worthy of death, what was there to prevent him from granting a reprieve to Absalom, who was guilty of murder?

Against the people. Against Absalom and all Israel with him. Absalom was the heir apparent. He therefore belonged to the people and they to him. A crime against him was a crime against all Israel. In refusing to allow the heir to the throne to return to his land, David was depriving the people of their rights to have with them their prospective king. The wrong against Absalom was a wrong against the nation he was to rule. The woman was still only hinting at what she wanted to say, but her words were sufficiently plain that David could no longer escape their meaning.

As one which is faulty. The woman now came directly to the point. David had just proved himself at fault in his dealings with Absalom by the verdict he had rendered in the case of her son. He had agreed that it was not right that she be deprived of her heir, but he was depriving Israel of its heir. In pronouncing himself in favor of her son he had condemned himself in his conduct toward Absalom.

The king doth not fetch. These words show clearly that David was responsible for the continued banishment of Absalom. All that was needed to bring him home was that David extend the invitation. The people wanted him, Absalom was anxious to return, and even the royal household would welcome him back. But David himself stood in the way. This was interpreted as a wrong, not only against Absalom, but against the nation at large.

Banished. From the Heb. *nadach*, “to impel,” “to thrust.” The root occurs in Deut. 30:3–5, Jer. 40:12, Micah 4:6, and Zeph. 3:19, where it is applied to the people of God driven into a heathen land.

14. We must needs die. Death is the common lot of all. A harsh treatment of Absalom cannot bring Amnon back from the dead. His blood has been spilt on the ground and cannot be gathered again. Then why not forget the past and restore Absalom to his home and kindred and to his rights to the throne?

Neither doth God respect any person. Literally, “God will not take away the life.” God is kind, loving, and forgiving. When anyone sins and afterward truly repents, the Lord is willing to forgive him his sin and restore him again to divine favor. These words constitute a fitting portrayal of God’s love toward the sinner, and show that the people of Israel had a reasonable familiarity with the plan of salvation. David himself had grievously sinned and had stood in need of mercy. It was only because of the great mercy of Heaven that he still remained alive and retained his throne. These words of the wise woman of Tekoah deeply touched the heart of David and moved him to mercy.

15. Have made me afraid. There is an intriguing and appealing ambiguity about these words. Is the woman talking of herself and her fears of the actions of her neighbors? Or does she mean this in regard to what she has said concerning Absalom and the attitude of the nation as a whole? She is still, in a manner, keeping up the pretense of reality, but she is also speaking directly to the heart of the king in relation to his dealings with Absalom. The ambiguity seems to be intentional, and it is that which gives to her words such a striking and touching appeal. In standing before the king she stands as a representative of the people. Her voice is the voice of the nation. Understanding the sentiment of Israel as a whole, she feels a pressure that she cannot resist, and it is this that gives her such boldness before the king. Surely David would not show greater consideration to her petition as a humble woman than he would show to her as uttering the wishes and desires of all the people.

16. The king will hear. The king had already heard and granted her appeal, as far as she and her son were concerned. But the king would also hear her appeal in regard to the case for which she specifically had come. She was now speaking indirectly in behalf of Absalom and was appealing to David to permit him to return. In fact she was telling David that this appeal was already heard and her petition already answered. The king would hear—of that she was supremely confident. Who was there who could resist such an appeal?

17. Comfortable. Literally, “for rest,” that is, they would set the disputants at peace.

An angel of God. Or “messenger of God.” The Hebrew word here translated “angel,” *mal’ak*, occurs 213 times in the OT and in the KJV is translated “angel” 111 times, “messenger” 98 times, and “ambassador” 4 times (see v. 20; ch. 19:27; 1 Sam. 29:9).

Be with thee. The closing words of her appeal are almost like a benediction. In doing what was right David would have the presence and blessing of God. She spoke as if in the name of God and assured the king that in responding to this call of right and reason, he would have God with him.

19. The hand of Joab. David had no difficulty in penetrating the woman’s disguise and understanding the source of the stratagem. Joab was close to David, and had probably previously expressed his convictions, but thus far without results. Knowing his persistence and craftiness, David immediately felt that Joab must be the one responsible for the woman’s visit.

21. Bring the young man. Joab had attained his purpose, and the king wisely commissioned him to carry the tidings to Absalom and to bring him home.

22. Thanked the king. Joab had good reason for thanking the king. If David had granted an unfavorable decision, Joab would have been held accountable for the situation.

24. Not see my face. Absalom’s murder of Amnon was not yet forgotten, and for the sake of the nation and Absalom himself, David felt it necessary to show his abhorrence of the crime that had been committed.

Saw not the king’s face. Being at home but not being allowed to see the face of his father or to appear with his brethren at the court began to prey upon the mind of Absalom. He felt that he was being wronged, and the people came to sympathize with him. In the eyes of the nation he was a hero who was to be praised for an act of right and justice rather than a criminal to be shunned for a misdeed.

25. His beauty. Absalom was a man of striking appearance. His personal bearing won the admiration of the people, and the treatment he suffered at the hand of David won their sympathies.

26. Two hundred shekels. According to the normal weight of the shekel this would be 2.28 kg., or about 5 lb. This seems to be an excessive weight of hair. Perhaps the weight of a royal shekel was different from the ordinary shekel.

27. Three sons. These probably died early in life (see ch. 18:18).

Tamar. Tamar was named after Absalom’s sister and shared her beauty (ch. 13:1). She was probably the one who married Uriel of Gibeah and had a daughter Maacah (or Michaiiah). The wife of Rehoboam and the mother of Abijah was called both Maacah the “daughter” of Absalom (evidently granddaughter, see on 1 Sam. 14:50), and Michaiiah, the daughter of Uriel (see 2 Chron. 13:2; 11:20–22; 1 Kings 15:2).

28. Saw not the king’s face. This naturally made Absalom bitter and morose, causing him to think that he was being unjustly treated. In his own eyes he probably felt that he had done no wrong in putting Amnon to death, since he had only meted out justice. Absalom was selfish and unscrupulous, ambitious and impulsive. He was admired by the people and was gradually winning their sympathies. It was hardly the part of wisdom for David to allow such a situation to continue.

29. Would not come. Since Joab had been successful in his former efforts, Absalom thought that he again might be of service. But Joab doubtless felt that he had already done as much as was wise, and that he would incur the king’s displeasure if he took any further steps in the matter.

30. Set it on fire. Such a stratagem certainly would secure action on the part of Joab, but it would be resorted to only on the part of an unscrupulous, irresponsible character.

32. That I may send. Absalom treated Joab as his servant, giving to him his orders and expecting them to be carried out. His conduct reveals how far he had already gone in his course of rebellion and his determination to secure a redress of his supposed grievances and a restoration to privileges he believed to be rightfully his. No attempt was made to explain his arson. He acted as if he were fully within his rights in taking the measures he did to bring Joab to him, and as if Joab were under obligation to carry out his wishes.

See the king's face. Absalom had been allowed to come home, but the king still refused to see him. Such treatment was to Absalom more galling than his exile. In the popular estimation David was unduly harsh in his treatment of his son, and the people were gradually drawn toward Absalom.

If there be any iniquity. Absalom knew that David was in no position to carry out justice. The king himself had been guilty of murder in the death of Uriah, and in the endeavor to mete out justice to Absalom he would only involve himself. The attitude of the people would probably not have supported David in such a course. Their hearts were with Absalom, and David knew it.

33. Kissed Absalom. Absalom was not only admitted into the royal presence but was given such treatment as indicated an outward reconciliation at least. Compare Esau kissing Jacob, and Joseph, his brethren (Gen. 33:4; 45:15). David's memory of his own guilt made him listless and irresolute. He apparently knew not which way to turn or what course to pursue. He recognized his duty, but the memory of his own transgression prevented him from doing what he knew should be done.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–33PP 728, 729

1–14PP 728

21, 24, 25, 28, 32, 33 PP 729

CHAPTER 15

1 *Absalom, by fair speeches and courtesies, stealeth the hearts of Israel.* 7 *Under pretence of a vow he obtaineth leave to go to Hebron.* 10 *He maketh there a great conspiracy.* 13 *David upon the news fleeth from Jerusalem.* 19 *Ittai would not leave him.* 24 *Zadok and Abiathar are sent back with the ark.* 30 *David and his company go up mount Olivet weeping.* 31 *He curseth Ahithophel's counsel.* 32 *Hushai is sent back with instructions.*

1. Chariots and horses. Absalom was secretly scheming to secure the crown. In order to impress the people he assumed an attitude that he thought befitted the heir apparent. Compare Adonijah, who followed the same course of action when he “exalted himself” with the purpose of taking the throne (1 Kings 1:5; see also 1 Sam. 8:11).

Fifty men to run before him. A bodyguard for the prince. By these measures Absalom appeared to be setting forth his claim to succeed to the throne. This was equivalent to issuing a general pronouncement that he considered himself the one who would next be king.

2. The gate. The city gate was the place where public business was carried on and where the judges took their position for the administration of justice (see on Gen. 19:1).

Came to the king. The people were wont to come to the king for judgment, but justice was slow. David's preoccupation with his troubles, his hesitation to take a firm stand in

rebuking wrong, evidently showed in his administration of public affairs. Absalom, however, courted public favor, placing himself in the way of the people and putting his time and services at their command.

Of what city? The prince was a skillful politician. By asking questions he indicated that he took a real interest in the people and left the impression that he was a personal friend.

Of one of the tribes. We would say “of such and such a tribe.” In each case the individual, of course, mentioned the particular tribe.

3. Good and right. Everyone was flattered by a favorable verdict, and thus influenced to sing Absalom’s praises throughout the land.

No man deputed. This was an insinuation that the king was careless and indifferent about the administration of justice. The purpose was, of course, to excite among the people a sense of grievance and discontent by censuring the king for remissness in his public responsibilities and to suggest that the remedy for such an unsatisfactory state of affairs would be found in making Absalom king.

4. Made judge. Absalom assumed an air of benignity and righteous indignation at the sad state of affairs. If only he were judge, the people would not be deprived of their rights, for he would see that the situation was quickly remedied. Every cause for dissatisfaction he turned to his own advantage and against the king. At every opportunity he expressed his sympathies and regrets at the inefficiencies of administration, and his earnest wish to set things right.

5. Kissed him. Absalom employed every art by which he might win the hearts of the people to himself. By his affability and extreme courtesy and by an air of assumed affection he caused the people to think that he was genuinely interested in their welfare and would, if king, give them an administration that would ensure to each individual the full enjoyment of all his rights.

6. On this manner. Absalom succeeded in creating a general discontent with David’s administration of government. The fickle populace did not see through his scheme.

Stole the hearts. The means employed were dishonest and unfair. Absalom purposely deceived the people, creating suspicion, disaffection, and animosity against the king. Everywhere men praised Absalom and criticized the king. People were wishing that David would abdicate so that Absalom might take his seat upon the throne.

7. Forty years. The Lucian edition of the LXX and the Syriac here read “4 years.” This is also the figure given by Josephus (*Antiquities* vii. 9. 1). It is not clear from what point these four years are to be reckoned, but it probably was from Absalom’s return to Jerusalem. If so, two years had been spent in conspiring for the throne, preparing the way by flatteries (see ch. 14:28).

Go and pay my vow. Such a request would have a particular appeal to David. But it was a cloak of religious devotion to conceal Absalom’s traitorous designs.

In Hebron. The vow was made, not at Hebron, but at Geshur (v. 8), but it was to be paid in Hebron. This place was well chosen as the site for Absalom’s rebellion. It was his birthplace (ch. 3:2, 3), and the site of David’s first capital. Many of the inhabitants were probably not reconciled to the transfer of the capital to Jerusalem. Being the place of Absalom’s birth, it afforded a plausible pretext for holding there the great sacrificial feast in fulfillment of Absalom’s supposed vow.

8. If the Lord. Absalom pretended to make his return to Jerusalem appear to be a providence of God, granted him in return for a solemn vow made while he was still an exile at Geshur.

9. Go in peace. David did not, as yet, see through Absalom's scheme, but gave him support and blessing. Meanwhile Absalom's deceptive arts were meeting with success. He had beguiled the people into thinking that he was their friend and benefactor and he had deceived David into believing that he was a dutiful son. What he did not as yet foresee was his own final failure and death.

10. Sent spies. Secret agents were sent to strategic places throughout the land, to communicate word concerning the conspiracy to those they found favorably disposed. The elaborate preparations for the rebellion are not given in detail, but evidently the plot had been carefully thought through. At a given signal, emissaries throughout the land were to proclaim the news that the coronation of Absalom was an accomplished fact.

11. Went in their simplicity. The 200 men who accompanied Absalom innocently were probably men of prominence who held influential positions. Once at Hebron, Absalom hoped to win them to his side, and thus they could exert a powerful influence in his favor. Or, failing to secure their support, he could prevent them from engaging in any efforts against him.

12. Ahithophel. He was estranged from David by personal resentment over David's misconduct against Bath-sheba, Ahithophel's granddaughter (see PP 735). His son Eliam (ch. 23:34) was the father of Bath-sheba (ch. 11:3). Ahithophel was no doubt a party to the conspiracy. He could well have played an important part in fomenting unrest in the regions around Hebron and in making sure that everything there was in readiness for Absalom's coronation.

Giloh. A town 6 1/2 mi. (10.4 km.) north-northwest of Hebron (Joshua 15:51), now *Khirbet Jâlā*.

Was strong. At the time of the feast the necessary preparatory work had already been done. Ahithophel's connection with the conspiracy would draw the support of many influential men and would make Absalom's cause appear certain of success. Some believe that Ps. 41:9 is an allusion to Ahithophel.

14. Let us flee. The decision was wise, for David at the moment was totally unprepared for the crisis. In his great peril David shook off his lethargy and indecision and seemed to regain something of his early courage and swiftness of action. The sequel proved this to have been the correct course of action. Both Ahithophel (ch. 17:1, 2) and Hushai (ch. 17:7–13) recognized that delay would be fatal, and that Absalom's greatest hope for success would be to take immediate steps against David. By his flight David gave himself time to make ready a defense, and the people time to ponder their course. The horrors of a long civil war were thus averted.

Smite the city. David feared that he could not at the moment make a successful stand at Jerusalem. Disaffection within the city, or perhaps even in his own household, might turn the tide against him. There would not be the spirit of unity that could have been expected if Jerusalem had been attacked by a foreign foe. It was his own son who would make the assault, and he undoubtedly had many supporters within the city.

16. Keep the house. Indicating that David was hoping to return.

17. In a place that was far off. Literally, "the house of distance," perhaps one of the last houses before crossing the Kidron Valley. Some think a proper name is indicated and

transliterate the clause, “Beth Merhak.” It was doubtless sufficiently distant to assure the king a measure of safety and to afford opportunity for a rest and for mustering the available forces.

18. The Cherethites. These and the Pelethites were among the most trusted part of David’s army and constituted his special bodyguard (2 Sam. 8:18; 20:7, 23; 1 Kings 1:38, 44; 1 Chron. 18:17). They were probably Cretan and Philistine mercenaries (see p. 34; see also on 1 Sam. 30:14; cf. Eze. 25:16; Zeph. 2:5). Others, on the basis of a Ras Shamrah tablet, consider the Cherethites to have been Canaanites. These men who were with David had embraced the religion of Israel, and were the most loyal of his men.

The Gittites. These 600 men were natives of the Philistine city of Gath who had joined themselves with David and had accepted the Hebrew religion. They were evidently commanded by Ittai (v. 19).

19. Wherefore goest thou? David had a real concern for these strangers from Philistia; he was also testing their loyalty. It was essential now that he have with him only those in whom he could place the fullest dependence. Thus far these men had proved themselves true. But now that David was engaged in a civil war, he may not have been certain that they would continue loyal.

20. Return thou. David’s concern for these strangers was well repaid. Treating these men kindly, he found them ready to throw in their lot fully with him.

21. In death or life. Ittai, himself a newcomer, pledged absolute fidelity. David could ask for nothing more. He knew that these men were ready, if necessary, to die with him. Ittai’s fidelity was like that of Ruth (Ruth 1:16, 17).

24. Zadok also. Zadok and Abiathar were the chief priests. When David fled, the priests planned to flee with him, taking along the ark of God. The people were happy at the presence of the ark, for they felt that this sacred symbol accompanying them would ensure the presence and blessing of God and thus would be a guarantee of ultimate victory. They were inspired with faith and courage, but the followers of Absalom, realizing that the sacred symbol was no longer with them, would be stricken with fear and terror.

Abiathar. This is the priest who later, when David was old, cast in his lot with Adonijah, helping him in his efforts to take the crown (1 Kings 1:7).

25. Carry back the ark. David realized that the ark alone would not ensure victory. In the days of Eli the ark was taken into battle against the Philistines, but was captured, and the Israelites defeated (1 Sam. 4:3–11). David knew that unless his heart and that of the people were right, the ark would not bring victory but disaster. The place for the ark was in Jerusalem rather than with him on his flight.

If I shall find favour. The secret of success and victory was not the presence of the ark but obedience and the favor of God.

26. Let him do. David recognized that he had been guilty of a grievous offense against God, and that the troubles that were overtaking him came, in part, as a result of his sins. He was willing to take whatever chastening the Lord had for him, being perfectly reconciled to God’s will.

27. A seer. A seer was appointed by God to instruct the people (see on Gen. 20:7; cf. 1 Sam. 9:9).

Return. As a friend of David, Zadok could be of greater service to him there.

Ahimaaz. The two sons of the priests could be of inestimable service to David in communicating information to him concerning affairs in the city (see vs. 35, 36).

28. In the plain. Literally, “By the fords.” The reading, “plain,” comes from the margin of the Hebrew Bible and is also the reading of the ancient versions. There were fords of the Jordan southeast of Jericho. David would wait, ready to cross the river. He had received only a brief report of the conspiracy, and his further plans must await more information.

30. His head covered. A sign of deep mourning (see 2 Sam. 19:4; Esther 6:12; Jer. 14:3, 4).

Weeping as they went. This was a dark moment for David and the people with him. They had left their homes and were fleeing for their lives. No one could predict the future. They could see only deeper shadows and greater sorrows ahead.

31. Into foolishness. Ahithophel was an able and wily counselor, but the Lord is mightier than men and can bring the counsel of the wisest to nought.

32. Hushai the Archite. The appearance of Hushai seemed to be the immediate answer to David’s prayer.

34. If thou return. Hushai had come to cast in his lot with David, but he could be of greater service if he returned to Jerusalem and offered his services to Absalom, doing what he could to bring the crafty counsel of Ahithophel to nought.

35. Out of the king’s house. With Hushai the friend of David serving Absalom as counselor, it would be possible to pass on to David secret information of the highest importance.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–37PP 729–735

1, 2 PP 729

3–8PP 730

10 PP 731

11, 12 PP 730

13–20PP 731

21, 24 PP 732

25–34PP 735

30 MB 24

CHAPTER 16

1 *Ziba, by presents and false suggestions, obtaineth his master’s inheritance. 5 At Bahurim Shimei curseth David. 9 David with patience abstaineth, and restraineth others, from revenge. 15 Hushai insinuateth himself into Absalom’s counsel. 20 Ahithophel’s counsel.*

1. Ziba. See ch. 9. As David began his flight he was met by Ziba with a welcome present. Ziba knew that this was a time when he could ingratiate himself with David at slight expense.

3. Kingdom of my father. The story told by Ziba is possible, but so improbable that it is difficult to see how David could have given it credence. Mephibosheth was a cripple and had little to gain from Absalom’s revolt. Even if that revolt had proved successful, it would not have given the throne to the seed of Saul, for Absalom wanted the throne for himself. Ziba had probably invented the tale in order to secure certain concessions from David.

4. All that pertained. Ziba's tale apparently was a base slander on his master, but David believed it and gave to Ziba the reward he sought. It was wholly unjust for the king to give away the property of Mephibosheth without hearing his side of the story, but in the stress and worry of the flight he thought only of the help Ziba offered.

5. Bahurim. A village on the road from Jerusalem to the Jordan (see on ch. 3:16), now *Râs eṭ-Ṭmîm*, directly east of Mt. Scopus.

Shimei. Shimei was a Benjamite. Many members of this tribe, though held under restraint when David was strong, were ever ready to turn against him when the opportunity offered. Shimei had not previously given any indication that he was disloyal to David. But as soon as adversity struck he showed his true colors. Where previously he had honored David, now he reviled and cursed him. Such a spirit is inspired by Satan, who delights to bring misery upon those who are already suffering misfortune.

6. Cast stones. The road may have followed a narrow ravine, with Shimei on one side and David and his men on the other (see v. 9, where Abishai requested permission to "go over"). Shimei thus kept along with the fugitives, close enough to annoy them with stones, yet out of reach.

7. Come out. Literally, "get out," or, "go out." Shimei took delight in David's misery, and in his hatred cursed the king and told him to get out of the country.

Thou bloody man. When David desired to build the Temple the Lord told him that he would not be permitted to do so because he had "shed blood abundantly" and had "made great wars" (1 Chron. 22:8). It is true that David had engaged in wars, but they were wars against the enemies of God's people, and for the object of establishing Israel as a strong nation in the east. The wars of David did not at all prove him to be personally a ruthless or "bloody man." As used by Shimei, these passionate words were a baseless slander (PP 736).

Thou man of Belial. Belial means "worthlessness" or "wickedness"; a man of Belial signifies a worthless scoundrel (see on Judges 19:22). A wicked woman is called in Hebrew a daughter of Belial (1 Sam. 1:16). The word is personified in 2 Cor. 6:15. Shimei was a man of evil temper, and in these vilifications of David, was simply revealing his own evil traits.

8. In whose stead. These words explain the real reason for Shimei's hatred and virulence. He was bitter because the crown of Israel had been taken from the house of Saul and given to the house of David. But it was the Lord, not David, who rejected Saul. Shimei's accusations were thus actually hurled against God.

Delivered the kingdom. It is true that the Lord had permitted the chain of events to take place whereby David's kingdom was apparently falling into the hands of Absalom, but the reason was far different from that set forth by Shimei. David's own conscience told him exactly what was responsible for his sudden reverse of fortunes. The Lord had warned the king that because of his sin against Bath-sheba and Uriah, judgments would come (ch. 12:10–12). David knew that he merited this punishment and wondered only at the kindness and mercy of God that it should have been so long delayed. But knowing both the mercy and goodness of God as well as His justice, David did not despair, but looked forward to the time when God would again intervene and restore the kingdom to him.

9. This dead dog. See 2 Sam. 9:8; 1 Sam. 24:14. To Abishai the man who was cursing David was a creature most contemptible. He was taking a cruel advantage of David's

misfortune and ought not to be permitted to live. David still was king and need not have suffered these insults to be hurled at him.

10. *So let him curse.* David believed that all his sufferings were from the hand of God, and that even these reproaches from Shimei were being allowed by the Lord. He made no attempt to clear himself from Shimei's charge, but was concerned only with the fact that he himself had done wrong. Since the present experience came, as he thought, by divine appointment, he felt that if he now attempted to interfere with Shimei's cursing, he would be opposing the will of the Lord.

Who shall then say? If Shimei was now cursing David because the Lord had told him to do so, who then should take him to task and ask him the reason for his course? Thus David reasoned.

11. *Seeketh my life.* David here openly accuses Absalom of seeking not only the throne but also the life of the king. That Absalom, his own flesh and blood, should thus turn against his father and seek to take his life was a matter difficult indeed to understand; but not so with the conduct of Shimei. He was of the family of Saul and could be expected to harbor a grudge against the man who had taken the crown from Saul's house.

Let him alone. Few men would have had the grace to display an attitude such as David exhibited in this trying hour. It would have been much easier to tell Shimei that he had gone far enough and to order him to desist. But as far as David was concerned he was willing to accept what he believed God had decreed. He had sinned grievously and by his sin had given an opportunity to many to excuse their shortcomings. But after his repentance and deep contrition he made no effort to excuse himself or to justify the course he had taken. When rebuked by the Lord, he humbly accepted his rebuke. When judgments came upon him, he made no effort to turn them aside. He showed himself humble, generous to others, and submissive to the will of the Lord. His willingness to accept fully this trial revealed his uprightness of character and his nobility of soul.

12. *Look on mine affliction.* David knew that the Lord was a God of great pity and mercy. Though suffering this abuse from one of his subjects, he took comfort in the thought that God saw and understood it all. Perhaps because of this very trial the Lord would in mercy send some special reward and blessing to take its place.

13. *Over against him.* As David and his men were going along the road, Shimei went along on the hillside opposite them. This suggests that Shimei was on one side of a ravine and David on the other.

14. *Refreshed themselves there.* This sentence seems to require the mention of a place at which David and his company halted. Some of the manuscripts of the Lucian edition of the LXX add, "beside the Jordan." Josephus agrees with this reading (*Antiquities* vii. 9. 4). It was probably the place previously agreed upon with Hushai at which David had arranged to tarry till he had received news from him (ch. 15:28).

15. *Came to Jerusalem.* David's flight from Jerusalem gave Absalom free access to the city. Things seemed to be going better for him than he had expected. His first plans probably were to make his headquarters at Hebron until the situation clarified itself. But when David evacuated Jerusalem, there was nothing to prevent his immediate occupation of the city.

Ahithophel. See on chs. 15:31; 16:22.

16. *David's friend.* Hushai was known to be a great friend of David, and his appearance at the court of Absalom was totally unexpected. Why he too should have

forsaken his friend and master appeared strange indeed. Absalom had looked for David to retain his hold on many of the people, and certainly on such a stalwart follower of his as Hushai. To have Hushai also forsake David seemed too good a fortune to be true. Absalom was both surprised and flattered, and no doubt felt more certain than ever of the success of his cause.

18. *His will I be.* The words of Hushai imply that he had a higher loyalty than simply to one individual; his first loyalty was to God and his next to the people of Israel. If God had chosen Absalom to be king, then he would wish to be in his service. The double meaning in Hushai's words, and the "if" implied in "whom the Lord, and this people, ... choose," was lost on Absalom, who was so sure that he was the chosen one.

19. *Thy father's presence.* Hushai did not wish to be regarded as fickle or disloyal. He had been a close friend of David's, but Hushai now made it appear that in serving Absalom, the son of David, he was still giving service to the house of David. Again the words appealed to Absalom and he accepted Hushai apparently without further question or suspicion.

21. *Thy father's concubines.* See on 1 Kings 2:17. Ahithophel was aware of the fact that the success of Absalom's rebellion was by no means certain. He knew that after the first burst of enthusiasm a reaction would come. David's position was far from hopeless. He had with him able generals and an experienced army. Many of the people had not yet forgotten him. If the situation went against Absalom and David should succeed in getting back his kingdom, the king might be in a mood to forgive Absalom. But there would be no conciliatory spirit toward Absalom's chief supporters. In such a case Ahithophel would be regarded as the most guilty and thus the most worthy of severe punishment. Such a situation this wily counselor was determined to prevent at all costs. His first concern, therefore, was to draw Absalom into a position that would make the breach with his father absolute and irreconcilable. His counsel was given with satanic cunning.

Be strong. Ahithophel contended that since the step being advised would prove to the people that Absalom was not going back on his rebellion, the men who were with him would give themselves completely to his cause.

22. *The top of the house.* The tent was pitched on the roof of the palace where David had committed his secret sin with Bath-sheba. Nathan had predicted the public nature of the punishment of David's secret crime (ch. 12:11, 12), and the fulfillment was in accord with his words. Because a prophet of God had made this prediction it must not be thought that God was the one responsible for this terrible crime. God's forecasts are not necessarily His decrees. Because of David's sin God did not exercise His power to prevent the evil consequences. In Bible figure, however, God is often described as doing that which He does not prevent (see ch. 12:11, 12; PP 739). As David had defiled the wife of another, so his bed was defiled. As he had done unto others, so others were permitted to do unto him. It may be that Ahithophel, as the grandfather of Bath-sheba, had in mind a desire to force the banished king to drink the same bitter cup he had forced others to drink.

23. *With David.* Ahithophel had been the counselor of David before he became the counselor of Absalom (ch. 15:12). He had been held in high esteem for his wisdom. But as he cast conscience aside, he began to resort to any device to achieve his ends. As the counselor of Absalom he was shrewd and wily, thinking only of the results to be achieved and willing to employ whatever measure he felt necessary.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5–23PP 736–739

5–8PP 736

9–12PP 737

15, 16 PP 738

20–23PP 739

23 5T 533

CHAPTER 17

1 *Ahithophel's counsel is overthrown by Hushai's, according to God's appointment. 15 Secret intelligence is sent unto David. 23 Ahithophel hangeth himself. 25 Amasa is made captain. 27 David at Mahanaim is furnished with provision.*

1. Twelve thousand men. Having made certain that the conspiracy would be carried to the bitter end, Ahithophel urged the necessity of taking immediate measures against David. To this end he counseled the selection of 12,000 picked men to make an instant attack. The size of the force suggested was not large, but he felt certain that David at this time would be in no condition to resist a sudden onset.

This night. Apparently the night of the day on which Absalom arrived at Jerusalem.

2. While he is weary. By this time David would barely have had time to reach the Jordan, and with his followers not yet completely organized, he would have been an easy victim for the forces of Absalom. If Ahithophel's proposal had been followed, the men with David would doubtless have been utterly routed, and David killed. Thus Absalom would have been made secure on his throne.

Make him afraid. Ahithophel's contention was that in making an immediate attack the army would fall on David while he was weary, unorganized, and dispirited, with the result that his men would be thrown into panic and the war would be over before it had scarcely begun.

Shall flee. In this estimate of the situation Ahithophel was undoubtedly correct. A sudden attack by night would throw them into confusion that would scatter them in all directions. In that way the losses of a pitched battle could be avoided and David might be captured and slain with practically no loss of men on either side.

3. All the people. Ahithophel was desirous of avoiding a long, drawn-out civil war. Such a conflict could be fought only at great loss to the nation. According to his suggestion he would simply go out, frighten into quick submission the people who had gone with David and bring them all back to Absalom. Then the land could be at peace and Absalom would quickly enjoy the fruits of his rebellion.

Whom thou seekest. The entire clause is obscure. It reads literally, "like the return of the whole the man whom you are seeking" (see RSV). The LXX reads, "as a bride returns to her husband: only thou seekest the life of one man."

4. Pleased Absalom well. Ahithophel's proposal appealed to all as logical.

5. Call now Hushai. Hushai had not been called to the council. But Absalom thought it well to secure Hushai's view before a final decision was reached. Hushai immediately recognized that if Ahithophel's plan were carried out, David's cause would be lost.

7. This time. Heb. *bepa'am hazzo'th*, literally, "this once." This is not a temporal phrase, as though Hushai said that the counsel was not good at this time but might be at another time. He meant, "in this instance the counsel of Ahithophel is not good." Hushai did not wish to make it appear that he was at variance with Ahithophel and that he was

purposely making a contrary proposal. He recognized the fact that Ahithophel was a wise counselor whose suggestions were usually of the highest value. In this instance, however, he ventured to suggest, Ahithophel's counsel was not wise.

8. *Thou knowest thy father.* Hushai did not find himself in an easy position. It devolved upon him to endeavor to make a wise plan appear to be unwise. Thus it became necessary to turn attention from the facts and to make it appear that an entirely different situation prevailed. But the new situation would have to appear plausible. Hence he called attention to David as the famous warrior of years gone by, the kind of man that Israel loved and other nations feared. Absalom knew only too well David's reputation for prowess and courage. The picture that Hushai set before him created in Absalom's mind visions of a formidable foe, shrewd and alert, bold and defiant, always prepared for any eventuality.

A man of war. The argument was that David would not allow himself to be drawn into a trap. A warrior is supposed to be always on his guard, always ready to meet the foe, always anticipating the enemy's next move and preparing to meet it. Any hope of catching David unawares ought to be abandoned. However, he was, in reality, utterly unprepared for the present situation, and both Hushai and Ahithophel knew it, but Hushai was endeavoring valiantly to cover up that fact.

9. *In some pit.* As had so often been the case when David fled from Saul.

Some other place. A phrase purposely vague, to suggest that many hiding places offered themselves, that David was well acquainted with these places but that his pursuers were not.

Be overthrown. In war there is always the possibility of sudden attacks and unexpected sallies, and of major or minor reverses. In the attack upon David some of Absalom's men would certainly be slain. Among a body of newly gathered troops the danger of panic under such circumstances would be much greater than among David's veterans. The fall of only a few men could easily grow into a report of a major defeat, with resultant terror and disaster.

10. *Shall utterly melt.* With the report of a major catastrophe circulating through the ranks, the hearts of even the most valiant would be gripped with fear. A sudden panic could easily ensue that would bring Absalom's cause down in swift and utter ruin. Hushai was appealing to Absalom's sense of fear and caution.

A mighty man. Hushai was doing his utmost to create in Absalom a wholesome sense of respect for and fear of David's prowess. David did indeed have with him very brave and valiant warriors, and Absalom well knew his father to be a most courageous and resourceful commander. Under ordinary conditions the picture that Hushai was painting would be all too true, but these were not ordinary circumstances. Hushai was making a bid for time, to give David the opportunity to pull himself and his men together, so that they would be ready for Absalom's attack. It is likely that Hushai knew that Absalom was not a man of courage, and in view of this he adroitly magnified the significance of the warlike prowess of David and the mighty men who were with him. His speech was skillfully adapted to engender fear in the weak but boastful son of David.

11. *Therefore I counsel.* Up to this point Hushai had been endeavoring to refute the counsel of Ahithophel. Now he put forth his own counterproposal. The suggestion was that they take time to muster all Israel into a great, invincible army, and that Absalom take command of this force in person. This was the kind of argument that would appeal to

Absalom. Proud and vainglorious, the new king would be glad to take the field at the head of his troops, marching forth in pompous majesty, seen and admired by all, and receiving the plaudits of the entire nation. No other proposal could so successfully stir the imagination of Israel's new king. Moreover, Hushai may also have endeavored to create a rift between Absalom and Ahithophel, by suggesting that Ahithophel was seeking his own interests and glory in his desire to command the troops (v. 1). How much more fitting and effective to have Absalom himself lead the conquering army!

12. *Some place.* At the present moment they did not know the exact whereabouts of David, but given time, they would discover his hiding place and make their attack. Certainty would take the place of uncertainty, and success would be assured.

As the dew falleth. The argument was that under the plan proposed by Hushai there was no possibility of failure—David would be overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. The forces of Absalom would be so numerous that they would fall upon the men of David and completely blot them out of existence. In Hushai's plan there would be absolutely no risk. With the entire nation devoted to Absalom, and with only a few men still loyal to David, it would be only a question of time till complete victory had been attained. Like the innumerable drops of dew the vast numbers of Absalom's men would descend in irresistible power upon their enemies.

13. *Into a city.* The objection might be raised to Hushai's proposal that, given time, David would make his way into some fortified city where he could fearlessly defy the surrounding armies of Absalom. Hushai here skillfully appeals to the vanity and imagination of Absalom by suggesting that in such a case David would be met with the power of united Israel, and thus there would be no hope for him. Given such numbers of men, Absalom would be able to draw the city itself off its very foundations, leaving not a stone remaining. Hushai's exaggerated language was such as to capture the imagination of the vainglorious king. He was highly flattered by the suggestion that all Israel would be on his side and would continue with him, and he was dazzled by the proposals to reveal before the nation his invincible might.

14. *Is better.* Hushai's proposals were particularly calculated to appeal to the king, and he was not slow to express his complete approval. The approbation of his supporters would, of course, quickly follow. One counselor was being set against the other. Under the circumstances it was well that Hushai had been called upon to speak last; thus he could make it appear that Ahithophel was hasty and impulsive, even self-centered and perfidious, and inconsiderate of the rights of Israel's new king.

The Lord had appointed. In his conspiracy against David, Absalom failed to reckon with God. He had able counselors and powerful supporters, and the hearts of many of the people were with him. But the nation of Israel, after all, belonged to the Lord, and it was David who had been divinely anointed as king. If he were to be deposed, God would have to be taken into the reckoning. Wise as the counsel of Ahithophel was, from a human point of view, the Lord decreed that it be brought to nought.

Bring evil upon Absalom. Without God on his side, Absalom was headed for disaster. No man can succeed as long as the powers of heaven are arrayed against him. A wisdom higher than that of men was directing in the affairs of Israel.

16. *Speedily pass over.* Absalom was a fickle man, and it was by no mean certain that he might not change his mind and decide, after all, to follow the counsel of Ahithophel. In such a case David would be overwhelmed if he stayed that night in the plains of the

wilderness. Hushai therefore quickly sent a warning to David, advising him of his danger and urging him immediately to cross the Jordan and to make good his escape on the other side.

17. En-rogel. This was a well outside Jerusalem, at the junction of the valleys of Kidron and Hinnom, now called Job's Well. En-rogel was a good contact point, for women constantly resorted to the well to draw water, and thus information could be relayed to the sons of the priests without attracting observation.

A wench. Heb. *shiphchah*, "maid," or "maidservant."

18. Bahurim. The place northeast of the city, where Shimei had cursed David (see on ch. 16:5).

A well. Perhaps a cistern, evidently dry.

19. Ground corn. Heb. *riphoth*, a word occurring only here and in Prov. 27:22, where it is translated "wheat." The exact meaning is uncertain.

20. Brook. Heb. *mikal*, a word occurring only here. The meaning is uncertain. The LXX reads, "They are gone a little way beyond the water." The woman did not deny that the pair had been there. To have done so might immediately have created suspicion. She simply indicated that they had gone on their way.

22. By the morning light. David and his men were wearied from their sudden flight and were given little opportunity for rest. That very night they were again on their way, crossing the Jordan and placing a barrier of water between themselves and the forces of Absalom (see Absalom's Flight and Usurpation of the Kingdom). When circumstances appeared darkest, David placed his trust in God, knowing that the Lord, who had thus far sustained him, would not forsake him now. The Third Psalm portrays his reactions to this ordeal.

23. Gat him home. Ahithophel was shrewd enough to see the outcome of the course Absalom was taking. Convinced that such a course was doomed to failure, he left the court and started for his home city of Giloh (ch. 15:12), near Hebron. The rejection of his counsel he regarded as a personal slight, for he had asked for the command of the forces that were to pursue David (v. 1). Hushai had counseled that the troops should be commanded by Absalom in person (v. 11). In his deep mortification Ahithophel took his departure from the man he had befriended.

Hanged himself. Ahithophel felt certain that his doom was only a question of time. When David regained his throne Ahithophel would certainly be held responsible as a ringleader of the revolt and would be put to an ignominious death. But it was more than fear of swift reprisal that caused Ahithophel to take his life. He could not bear to see his counsel ignored and consequently took the cowardly way out. Such was the end of a man who was worldly-wise but not wise in the things of God.

Of his father. Ahithophel's suicide did not prevent his burial in the family tomb.

24. Mahanaim. This city had been the headquarters of Ish-bosheth (ch. 2:8). It was situated at a site not yet identified, probably not far east of the Jordan, from the main districts of Israel. The same reasons that made it suitable as a capital for Ish-bosheth now made it a favorable site for David in his exile. The city was strongly fortified, and the population of the surrounding region was friendly to David. The country had abundant supplies of food and could well take care of David and his men.

Passed over Jordan. As soon as Absalom had mustered the forces of Israel he crossed the Jordan with a large army in pursuit of David. Hushai's counsel, however, had attained its end, for David had been given time to make good his escape and establish himself in his new headquarters. In these wild, rugged regions of Transjordan the size of Absalom's army was more of a hindrance than a help, for they were undisciplined and poorly trained. But in his rashness and inexperience. Absalom pressed on, eager for the contest with David that he hoped would give him the kingdom.

25. Amasa captain of the host. Joab had befriended Absalom and was responsible for bringing him back from his exile and restoring him to favor with David. But when Absalom revolted, Joab remained loyal, accompanying David in his flight and retaining his position as commander in chief. Amasa, a cousin of Joab, was given command of Absalom's army.

Ithra an Israelite. Called also "Jether the Ishmeelite" (1 Chron. 2:17). "Jether" is simply another form of "Ithra"; "Israelite" is probably "Ishmeelite" misspelled.

Abigail the daughter of Nahash. According to 1 Chron. 2:16 Abigail was a sister of Zeruiah, and both were sisters of David, which suggests the conclusion that Abigail was a daughter of Jesse. But the verse before us states that she was "the daughter of Nahash." Two explanation are possible: (1) Nahash was the wife of Jesse (though it must be admitted that "Nahash" is usually a man's name; (2) or the term "sisters" in 1 Chron. 2:16 means half sisters, with Abigail and Zeruiah being sisters of David only through the mother, and Nahash being the mother's husband at the time Abigail was born.

26. Gilead. A beautiful, prosperous country east of the Jordan and extending from Moab on the south to Bashan on the north. Mahanaim was somewhere within its borders, but its exact location is not known.

27. Shobi the son of Nahash. There is a possibility that "Nahash of Rabbah" was the king of Ammon who was defeated by Saul at Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 11:1–11; 1 Sam. 12:12), and who befriended David during his exile (2 Sam. 10:2). However, the latter may have been the son of the former. If a king of Ammon is indicated, Shobi may have been left as governor over the country after David's overthrow of the Ammonites for the insult against the Israelite ambassadors (2 Sam. 10:1–5; 12:29–31). On the other hand, Shobi may have been simply the son of some Israelite by the name of Nahash who lived in the Ammonite city of Rabbah, or of an Ammonite commoner.

Machir the son of Ammiel. This was the man who had been the guardian of Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan (see on ch. 9:4). As Machir once had shown kindness to the house of Saul, so now he showed kindness to David. David was now reaping a reward for his kindness to a descendant of the house of Saul.

Barzillai. See ch. 19:31–40. He was the ancestor, through a daughter, of a family of priests who were called the children of Barzillai (Ezra 2:61–63).

28. Beds, and basons. Presents were brought to David of such things as would make life comfortable for him and his men in exile. This is an evidence of the natural friendliness of the Israelites living across the Jordan. They had been friendly to Saul and his house, as they now were to David.

Wheat, and barley. This list of foodstuffs gives an interesting picture of the diet then in common use among the Hebrews.

Parched pulse. Roasted grain. Not mentioned here in the LXX or Syriac.

29. Honey, and butter. Gilead was famous for its cattle and herds (Num. 32:1; 1 Chron. 5:9).

Cheese of kine. Heb. *shephoth baqar*. *Baqar* means cattle, but *shephoth* occurs only here and its meaning is uncertain. It is thought to indicate some product from cattle, such as cream, cheese, or beef.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–29PP 739–742

1–14PP 740

14–21PP 741

22, 24 PP 742

CHAPTER 18

1 *David viewing the armies in their march giveth them charge of Absalom.* 6 *The Israelites are sore smitten in the wood of Ephraim.* 9 *Absalom, hanging in an oak, is slain by Joab, and cast into a pit.* 18 *Absalom's place.* 19 *Ahimaaz and Cushie bring tidings to David.* 33 *David mourneth for Absalom.*

1. Numbered the people. That is, David mustered the people, organizing his forces for the impending attack. Men were constantly flocking to him and needed to be incorporated into already existing detachments or organized into new units.

2. A third part. The army was organized into three grand divisions. How large each of these divisions was is not revealed. Some think that there was a total of only 3,000 men, with 1,000 men in each division, but of this there is no evidence. The division of armies into three parts seems to have been common among the Hebrews (see Judges 7:16; 9:43; 1 Sam. 11:11).

The hand of Joab. Joab was the commander in chief, under David. His name is always listed first among the three commanders (see vs. 5, 12), and he is clearly recognized as the one in supreme command (vs. 10, 16, 20, 21, 29). Joab was made “chief” of the army when David first captured Jerusalem (1 Chron. 11:6), and at the close of David’s reign he still held the supreme command (2 Sam. 24:2; 1 Chron. 27:34).

Ittai the Gittite. Ittai was of the Philistine city of Gath and had only recently come to Israel and joined himself to the forces of David (ch. 15:19–21). He had accepted the Hebrew religion and proved himself true both to David and to Israel’s God (see PP 732).

Surely go forth. David was facing the supreme crisis of his career, but he lacked nothing of courage. He was willing to take the same risks he was asking of his people, and more.

3. Not go forth. The soldiers saw that in this instance David’s presence with them would be more of a hindrance than a help. If the opposing army learned that David was with his men, every effort would be made against his person. If he could be slain, Absalom would have attained his purpose. So David was urged not to be present in the battle.

Thou art worth. In the majority of the Hebrew manuscripts the clause thus introduced reads literally, “For now like us [there are] ten thousand.” The translation of the KJV is obtained from the LXX, the Syriac, the Vulgate, and two Hebrew manuscripts. The difference between the two readings of this clause is only one letter in the Hebrew.

Out of the city. Taking his place in the city with the reserve forces, David would be in a position to take advantage of any turn of battle. If things went against his men, he would be able to send relief. Whatever turn the battle might take, the army would know

that their commander was safe. His presence within the walls of the fortress would be a source of strength and inspiration to them as they fought, stirring them up to effort and bravery.

4. *What seemeth you best.* In this instance the counsel of the army was better than the will of the king, and David recognized it as such. Instead of rashly insisting that he join his men in the conflict, he bowed to their wishes and expressed his willingness to comply with their purpose. David may actually have been happy to remain behind, because it would not have been easy for him to direct this battle in person against his son.

5. *Commanded Joab.* Joab as the commander in chief came first, leading his men. As he passed by, David gave his last parting instructions. This was a battle against his own son, who must be defeated, or David would lose both his throne and his life. But as the battle began, David's tender heart went out in love and pity to his son. His last words to Joab were to deal gently with Absalom—the leader of the rebellion. At the time it seemed to David that he would rather lose his own life and his kingdom than to see harm come to his wicked son. David's fatherly concern for the man who had brought to the nation so much of pain and suffering only intensified the bitterness of Joab and his men against Absalom (see PP 743).

6. *Wood of Ephraim.* There is not other reference in the Bible to this wood. The location was in Gilead, to the east of the Jordan, although Ephraim itself was to the west. In a wooded area the huge army of Absalom would find itself at a disadvantage. It would be impossible to keep under control the large number of undisciplined men. Battling here and there in the woods, separated from one another, not knowing what was going on elsewhere, the men would become confused.

8. *Over the face of all the country.* These words give a vivid picture of the fluid nature of the battle. It was spread over a vast area, with men running in all directions, becoming lost in the woods, separated from one another, and entangled in the brush.

Devoured more people. The rocky thickets and dense vegetation of the wild terrain, intricate thorn groves interspersed with swamps and stretches of gravel and sand, provided a battlefield that was evidently more deadly to the hosts of Absalom than to the seasoned veterans of David.

11. *Why didst thou not smite him?* Joab realized that if the leader of the conspiracy could be put out of the way, victory would be won and the rebellion be over. Joab had done much for Absalom, befriending him and securing his return to Jerusalem (ch. 14:1–24). But Absalom's shameless betrayal of the trust placed in him turned Joab bitterly against him. Joab was determined to put him out of the way regardless of the orders of David.

12. *The king charged thee.* The soldier was a man of principle and would obey the command of the king, however unreasonable it might appear. He reminded Joab of the orders that had been given him and all the army, and he felt that those orders should be obeyed.

13. *Against mine own life.* Literally, “against his life.” The reading of the KJV is found in the margin of the Hebrew Bible and in a number of Hebrew manuscripts. If the soldier had taken the life of Absalom, inquiry would have immediately been made, and when it was discovered who had disobeyed the king's command, the offender would have been slain. Joab himself would probably have taken his stand against him and issued the order for the execution. Joab was a valiant commander, but he was self-willed and

unscrupulous. Happy though he might have been over Absalom's death, he might have feigned great indignation at such a gross violation of the king's command and have ordered the violator put to death.

14. *I may not tarry thus with thee.* The Targums and one of the manuscripts of the LXX read, "wherefore I will pierce [him] in thy presence." Joab felt the thrusts of the man's argument, but he was determined to have Absalom slain.

15. *Ten young men.* These men composed Joab's bodyguard.

16. *Joab blew the trumpet.* The blast on the trumpet was the signal that the war was over (see ch. 2:28; 20:22). The death of Absalom ended the struggle. With the leader of the revolt out of the way, there was no need of further bloodshed; so Joab immediately called off the battle.

17. *Cast him into a great pit.* To deny him the honor of burial in the family tomb. Like some dead beast, his body was tossed into a pit in the forest where he was slain. That was the end of the proud and handsome prince who placed his own interests before the interests of his people, his father, and his God.

Heap of stones. A lasting memorial of ignominious reproach.

All Israel. In this narrative the expression refers to the followers of Absalom (see v. 16).

To his tent. That is, to his home (see Deut. 16:7; Joshua 22:4–8; 1 Sam. 13:2; 2 Sam. 19:8).

18. *A pillar.* Absalom had erected for himself a beautiful and costly monument. But instead of being interred in a sepulcher of the kings, his body was thrown into a pit in the forest. The site of Absalom's pillar has not been identified. Some think that it was in Jerusalem and others believe that it was at Hebron.

The so-called "Absalom's Tomb," an elaborate square structure with columns in partial relief carved from the rock, in the upper Kidron Valley, actually dates from the Hellenistic period and has nothing to do with Absalom, except in name.

The Hebrew word translated "place" literally means "hand," and may, perhaps, stand for a stele. In the excavations of Lachish an altar was found with a right hand, palm outward and fingers spread, depicted in deep relief on one of its sides. Hands were also carved into the steles of Carthage. Hence it is possible that Absalom had a stele erected with a hand carved in it.

No son. His three sons (ch. 14:27) presumably died in infancy.

19. *Ahimaaz the son of Zadok.* It was Ahimaaz who with Jonathan had carried Hushai's message to David (ch. 17:17–21; cf. ch. 15:27). He appears to have been a well-known runner (ch. 18:27). In the present war he served as a messenger, and thus was ready to carry the tidings to David as soon as the trumpet had sounded and the battle was over.

20. *The king's son is dead.* Joab recognized that the tidings that were to be carried to David would not be regarded by him as good. He would be concerned over one thing only—the fate of Absalom. Under the circumstances, nothing else mattered, whether it was defeat or victory, as long as Absalom was safe.

21. *To Cush.* Literally, "to the Cushite."

22. *Run after Cush.* The victory over the forces of Absalom was news of the greatest importance, and Ahimaaz keenly desired to carry that message to David.

No tidings ready. The Hebrew word for “tidings” may also be translated “reward for good tidings” (ch. 4:10). In the LXX the clause is translated “thou hast no tidings for profit.” Ahimaaz would be expected to be the bearer of good tidings (v. 27), but Joab knew well that David would receive the word of Absalom’s death as a most heartbreaking and tragic report. For the delivery of such a sad message Ahimaaz would have no thanks from the king.

23. By the way of the plain. Probably by the way of the Jordan valley rather than the shorter but more difficult way over the hills. The two roads probably met some distance from Mahanaim. Starting later, but being a fleet runner and choosing the swifter way, Ahimaaz outran the Cushite.

24. The roof over the gate. There was frequently a tower over the gate of an Oriental city, and on the roof a watchman stood, eagerly looking for the approach of some messenger with news of the battle.

25. If he be alone. David immediately caught the significance of a man running alone—he would be a messenger with news of the battle. If he were a fugitive from the battle he would probably not be alone, others would be running with him.

27. He is a good man. David judged the nature of the message from the nature of the runner. Such a man as Ahimaaz would be the bearer of welcome tidings.

28. All is well. In his eager haste Ahimaaz announced to the king that all was well—the battle was over, and the Lord had delivered David’s enemies into his hand. Such news indeed was good, but that was not the news the king was most interested to hear.

29. I saw a great tumult. Ahimaaz skillfully evaded David’s question. He well knew that Absalom was dead, for it was his death that had brought an end to the battle. But the information as to exactly what had taken place he left for the Cushite to deliver.

31. Hath avenged thee. The Cushite’s message was couched in the same general terms as that of Ahimaaz, but it clearly implied that Absalom had been killed. Out of deference to the king, however, that detail was not specifically mentioned.

33. O Absalom, my son. There are few places in the Bible that picture more poignant grief. David’s sorrow was not merely that of a father for his departed son, although for the tenderhearted king such a sorrow would be heavy enough. What made the situation more difficult for David was that he himself was responsible for the course of events that had had its climax in this terrible tragedy. Absalom had slain his brother after Amnon had violated his sister, Tamar, and now he in turn was slain in battle against his own father. All this followed in natural consequence of David’s heinous sin.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–33PP 742–745

1–4PP 742

5–13PP 743

14–17, 24–33PP 744

CHAPTER 19

1 *Joab causeth the king to cease his mourning.* 9 *The Israelites are earnest to bring the king back.* 11 *David sendeth to the priests to incite them of Judah.* 18 *Shimei is pardoned.* 24 *Mephibosheth excused.* 32 *Barzillai dismissed, Chimham his son is taken into the king’s family.* 41 *The Israelites expostulate with Judah for bringing home the king without them.*

1. It was told Joab. The word of David's great grief for Absalom was quickly carried to all his men. Joab was responsible for the death of Absalom, and David's grief for his son might easily turn to anger at the disobedient commander in chief.

2. Into mourning. God had given victory to the forces of David, and they had real reason for rejoicing. The rebellion was over, David was restored to his throne, and the nation had been spared the horrors of a long, costly civil war. But the people found that the city was filled with sorrow instead of joy, because of David's grief over the death of his son.

3. By stealth. As the victorious hosts approached the city, the king, who should have been on hand to greet them, was not there. Instead of offering words of thanks and cheer for the troops who that day had risked their lives for him, David sat above the gate, loudly wailing for the loss of his son. Instead of marching proudly in triumph the men now broke their ranks, slinking into the city, downcast and ashamed. It seemed that all their effort had been in vain, and what they had thought of as a glorious victory was only a mistake and, in the eyes of the king, a sad defeat. They entered the city with the air of men defeated in battle, their purposes thwarted and their hopes dashed to the ground.

4. O Absalom. The heart of David was torn with uncontrollable grief. He could think of nothing except that Absalom was dead. The return of his troops in triumph, the restoration of his throne, the end of the civil war, seemed to mean nothing, with Absalom gone.

5. Thou hast shamed. The gruff old commander in chief took the king severely to task for his conduct before his returning soldiers. These men had fought valiantly and well. They had risked their all for the king, and for the members of his family, but he had no word of thanks for them. He could think only of his personal loss. That others too that day were sad and mourned the loss of brothers, husbands, and fathers who had given their lives in order that David might retain his throne, meant nothing to the king. It was a cutting and bitter rebuke from the old general, but he was simply telling the harsh truth.

7. Arise, go forth. The occasion called for action, and Joab bluntly and fearlessly told David exactly what he ought to do.

I swear by the Lord. In uttering this solemn oath Joab was not making a threat that he would lead the people in revolt against David, he was only calling attention to an unpalatable truth. The situation was fraught with danger. A large part of the nation had already turned from David and had supported Absalom in his efforts to take David's life and his throne. And now David was on the verge of alienating those who had continued loyal to him and making them also his enemies.

That befell thee. Joab predicted that David, by his unnatural conduct, was precipitating for himself the greatest crisis of his life. He used strong words, but they were necessary in order to rouse the king from the selfishness and foolishness of his grief.

8. Sat in the gate. David recognized the justice of Joab's cutting rebuke and the wisdom of his counsel, and quickly responded by taking his position at the city gate, where he could speak words of thanks and courage to his people.

Israel had fled. After Absalom died, his supporters fled to their homes.

9. At strife. The death of Absalom had left the land in a state of disorganization. There were probably many different groups, all at odds with one another. Some of Absalom's strong adherents were obviously slow to welcome David back to his throne. Others were perhaps entirely indifferent to the Davidic dynasty and willing to have

almost anyone else than David as king. David, of course, still had many supporters. Under the circumstances, however, he had no great desire to return to Jerusalem to take his throne.

The king saved us. The good deeds of David were recalled. He had saved his people from the hands of their enemies and now he had been driven from the country and was living in exile. They contended that he ought to be brought back. Evidently many of the people were vexed at the slowness and indecision of the leaders.

10. Why speak ye not? Because of the hesitation and delay the people were beginning to remonstrate with their leaders and were urging them to take steps toward returning David to his throne.

12. Are ye the last? These words indicate that considerable interest must have been manifested in Israel for David's return. But David was vexed at Judah, his own flesh and blood, for being so slow about taking measures toward his recall.

13. Say ye to Amasa. David was skillful in dealing with men in public office. Amasa had been the commander in chief for Absalom, and now that he was dead, Amasa was the leader who above anyone else could keep the spirit of the rebellion alive. Like Joab, Amasa was David's nephew (1 Chron. 2:13–17), and David, by the dramatic move of making him commander in chief, sought to win Amasa's loyalty. In turn Amasa would be expected to bring over to David what remained of the military organization of Absalom. Presumably David was restless under the overbearing influence of Joab and desired to be rid of him. It was through Joab's influence that Absalom had been brought back to Jerusalem from his exile, and it was Joab who had slain Absalom in direct violation of David's command. His recent cutting rebuke (vs. 5–7) was still ringing in David's ears. David evidently felt that the time had come to replace Joab, and it was a shrewd political move to put Amasa in his place.

14. Return thou. This was a formal invitation from the leaders of Judah asking David to return to take his crown. He was willing to be king only by the consent of the tribes. He had not sought the kingdom in the first place, and he wished all to understand that he would not now resume his position unless requested to do so by the nation.

15. Judah came to Gilgal. David came down from Mahanaim to the eastern bank of the Jordan, opposite the Jericho ford. The representatives of Judah went to Gilgal on the western bank, to be on hand when David crossed the Jordan and came into Judah and his own territory.

16. Shimei. This Benjamite was a time-server. Only a short while before he had cursed the king when he fled from Jerusalem. Now that David was returning, Shimei lost no time in trying to make his peace with him.

17. A thousand men. The Benjamites were urgent to impress David that they held no grudge against him and that they welcomed him back as king. After all, the cause of the house of Saul was dead, and there was no hope that any descendant of his would ever again receive the crown of Israel.

Ziba. See ch. 9:2, 9, 10. It was politic for Ziba, too, to be on hand when David returned, for he had by apparent guile received from David all that pertained unto Mephibosheth (ch. 16:1–4), and he knew that the time of reckoning would come (see ch. 19:24–29).

Before the king. Shimei and Ziba were not there because they welcomed David's return—they feared it, and would far rather have had him remain away. But they knew

that they must attempt to make their peace with David or pay the price. They endeavored to make amends not from sincerity, but from necessity.

18. *There went over a ferry boat.* Literally, “the ford passed over,” which obviously should read, “they passed over the ford.” The meaning simply is that they crossed the ford to bring over the king’s household and to be at his service, doing what they could to facilitate his crossing and that of all his staff and goods.

20. *I have sinned.* Shimei offers no excuses, for he knows that such would be useless. He is guilty, and frankly confesses it, throwing himself upon David’s mercy.

21. *Be put to death.* According to the customs of the time Shimei’s cruel cursing of David at the time of David’s flight would normally merit death, but Shimei had cast himself on David’s mercy and asked for forgiveness. David was willing to be lenient, whereas Abishai could think only of stern justice.

22. *Adversaries unto me.* This was a time for mercy, not hard, cold justice. The occasion called for reconciliation, not a meting out of punishment upon all who had previously turned their backs upon David. The greatness and magnanimity of David was displayed on this occasion. The king attempted to win the nation back to himself by kindness and mercy. He indicated that all would be forgiven who wished to make their peace with him. With a lesser man than David there would have been much shedding of guilty blood and there would also have been much enmity as a result. In advocating a policy of retaliation the sons of Zeruiah were adversaries rather than friends of the cause of David.

This day king. Because he was king, David could afford to be merciful. If his cause had been still in doubt, sterner measures would have been in order to ensure the stamping out of opposition.

23. *Thou shalt not die.* With characteristic generosity David assured Shimei that his life would be spared. Shimei had been guilty of a serious crime and should have suffered punishment, but to have executed him would not have been in keeping with the spirit of the occasion. David chose to accept Shimei’s professed repentance at face value. However, Shimei’s insincerity must have become evident in due time, for David later charged Solomon concerning him: “His hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.” (1 Kings 2:8, 9; cf. 1 Kings 2:44).

24. *The son of Saul.* That is, the grandson of Saul. Mephibosheth also felt it wise to come to David as early as possible to declare his loyalty to him. After David’s flight Mephibosheth had observed the signs of deepest mourning for him, as evidenced by his neglect of his person, thus proving his loyalty to David’s cause.

25. *Come to Jerusalem.* The narrative of the meeting at the Jordan is interrupted to continue the explanation of Mephibosheth’s actions.

26. *Deceived me.* Mephibosheth claimed that for purposes of personal gain, Ziba had told David a base falsehood, thus causing David to regard as ungrateful and disloyal his erstwhile faithful servant (ch. 16:1–4). According to the new version of the incident the two asses Ziba brought to David had actually been prepared at Mephibosheth’s orders, so that he could take his flight with David. Instead they had been stolen by Ziba, who left Mephibosheth at home, helpless in his lameness.

28. *Dead men before my lord.* In the usual course of events a king would have slain all the royal seed remaining of the dynasty being displaced, so that there might be no possibility of an attempt by any of them to regain the throne. But David had shown

kindness to Mephibosheth, not only in permitting him to live, but in providing him with a share of the royal bounties. Although Mephibosheth had been wronged by Ziba, he offered not to complain, because David had previously been so kind to him.

29. *Divide the land.* David had done Mephibosheth an injustice in accepting Ziba's story without verification and in bestowing on him all his master's possessions before hearing the other side of the case (ch. 16:4). David now realized that an injustice had been done and endeavored to undo it by returning to Mephibosheth half his property. This would hardly seem sufficient, however, to satisfy justice. If Ziba told the truth, he should have kept all; if not, he should have been deprived of all his gains and been punished besides. David's compromise was both weak and unjust.

30. *Let him take all.* Mephibosheth sought to impress David that his purpose in coming to him was not to secure redress but to demonstrate his loyalty, that he was willing that Ziba retain everything, however unjust that might be. The important consideration was that David had returned in peace, and for this Mephibosheth expressed his gratefulness.

31. *Barzillai the Gileadite.* See ch. 17:27. The narrative here returns to David's crossing of the Jordan. After the meeting with Mephibosheth, the account of David's parting with his host, Barzillai, is set down.

With the king. It was a matter of politeness to accompany a guest on a part of his journey. Barzillai proved himself to be a kindly man and a gracious host. Furthermore, he proved his loyalty to David.

32. *Aged man.* At 80 years Barzillai was considered to be very old. The average length of life had dropped much since the days of the early patriarchs. During the days of the divided monarchies the greatest age reached by any king of Judah was not more than 68 (see 2 Kings 15:1, 2). Manasseh died at 67 after his reign of 55 years, by inclusive reckoning (2 Kings 21:1).

36. *The king recompense.* Barzillai sought nothing for himself. God had been kind to him. There was nothing further to seek in the pleasures of this world. Life for David during his exile beyond the Jordan had been happier because of the kindness of Barzillai.

37. *Chimham.* There is no positive evidence as to the identity of Chimham, but from David's charge to Solomon to "shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite" (1 Kings 2:7), it would seem that he was a son of Barzillai. Mention is made in Jer. 41:17 of "the habitation of Chimham, which is by Beth-lehem," from which it may be supposed that Chimham accepted David's offer and received a home near Bethlehem.

39. *All the people.* The term "people" is employed in this narrative for the followers of David (see chs. 15:17, 23, 24, 30; 16:14; 17:2, 3, 16, 22; 18:1-4, 6, 16; 19:2, 3, 8, 9). For the followers of Absalom the term "Israel" has been used (see chs. 16:15; 17:15; 18:16, 17).

Was come over. Barzillai seems to have crossed the river with David before turning homeward.

40. *All the people of Judah.* Judah seems finally to have taken the most active part in the restoration of David to his throne. David's words to the elders of Judah (vs. 11, 12) evidently had had its effect, and there was a general gathering of the people to welcome him back from exile to his crown, throne, and kingdom.

Half the people of Israel. In v. 11 "all Israel" is said to have been interested in David's return, but now only "half the people" turn out to greet him. A small attendance

was to be expected, for Israel, as distinguished from Judah, was farther away, and thus it would not have been feasible for so many to come out to welcome David. Further, the word concerning David's return seems not to have been circulated as widely in the north as in Judah (see v. 41).

41. *All the men of Israel.* Long before the disruption at the time of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12) there had existed a degree of division between the people of Israel in the north and Judah in the south (see 1 Sam. 11:8; 17:52; 18:16; 2 Sam. 2:4, 8–10; 3:10, 12, 21; 5:5). Jealousies between the tribes frequently manifested themselves, even in the earliest period (Judges 8:1; 12:1). When David became king he did not at first rule over all the nation but only over “the house of Judah” (2 Sam. 2:4). Later the endeavor was made to set up his throne “over Israel and over Judah” (ch. 3:10). Only after David had reigned seven years in Hebron did “the tribes of Israel” come to him to acknowledge him as their bone and flesh and to make him their king (ch. 5:1–5). Now David had returned from his exile, and the old jealousies again became evident.

42. *Near of kin to us.* Judah rightly claimed a special hold on David, inasmuch as he belonged to their tribe (see v. 12). But they wanted to make it plain that he had shown them no special favoritism. Such a statement from the men of Judah is a striking testimony to the fairness of David's government. He endeavored to treat all tribes alike, giving to none the excuse that others were being accorded special favors denied to them.

43. *Were fiercer.* In the angry altercation that arose between the tribes, the men of Judah were more vehement than their neighbors to the north. The dispute was happily arrested after a time, but the fact of its occurrence did not augur well for the future. The present differences between north and south foreshadowed greater troubles to come. Sectional jealousies and rivalries were constantly sowing the seeds of disaster.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–8, 33PP 745

CHAPTER 20

1 *By occasion of the quarrel, Sheba maketh a party in Israel.* 3 *David's ten concubines are shut up in perpetual prison.* 4 *Amasa, made captain over Judah, is slain by Joab.* 14 *Joab pursueth Sheba unto Abel.* 16 *A wise woman saveth the city by Sheba's head.* 23 *David's officers.*

1. *Sheba.* A Benjamite who still retained a spirit of enmity to the house of David. He took advantage of the dispute between the men of Israel and Judah (ch. 19:41–43) to raise the cry of revolt against the king.

To his tents. For the use of this phrase, see 1 Kings 12:16; 2 Chron. 10:16.

2. *From after David.* Only a short time before the men of Israel were loud in their protestations that they had a greater claim upon David than had the men of Judah (ch. 19:43). Human nature is fickle indeed. David's throne was still far from secure in spite of all the loud words of welcome.

The men of Judah clave. The rebellion of Absalom had originated in Judah, and it was Judah that had been tardy in returning to the standard of David (ch. 19:11), but now Judah clave to him. It was well for David that he had wooed rather than alienated the affections of Judah, for it was to these men who were so slow to welcome him that he now owed his throne.

3. *Living in widowhood.* The tragic fate of David's ten concubines was obviously the result of Absalom's shameful deed carried out at the suggestion of Ahithophel (ch.

16:21). The women would continue to be housed and fed as long as they lived, but to all intents and purposes their husband was dead to them.

4. To Amasa. David had promised Amasa that he would be his commander in chief (ch. 19:13), and he kept his promise. A grave crisis had arisen, and Amasa was ordered to have the army in readiness within three days to crush the revolt. For a new man this was not an easy task at such a time of division and turmoil.

5. He tarried longer. No cause is given for Amasa's delay in mustering the army. The wily Joab still had a great hold on the people, and he could hardly be expected to do much to expedite the organization of a fighting force that was to be under the command of his rival and successor. Amasa probably did his best, but may have been thwarted on every hand by officers and men who were still loyal to Joab and by the difficulties inherent in the general unrest and division then prevailing.

6. Abishai. The brother of Joab (ch. 2:18). David had recently manifested his impatience with him (ch. 19:22), but now turned to him rather than to Joab. He was evidently determined to pass over Joab, regardless of the seriousness of the crisis. But Joab was not easily eliminated, as the sequence of events was to reveal.

Do us more harm. The nation was still in a state of dissatisfaction and unrest, and David had not yet regained a firm grip on affairs. In this general state of disorganization almost anything could happen, and David was keen enough to sense the extreme peril of the situation. Furthermore, the cleavage was along the old Judah-Israel line of division.

Fenced cities. If Sheba was given opportunity to secure a number of fortified cities and entrench himself behind the walls of one of them, the task of stamping out his rebellion would become exceedingly difficult. David's greatest hope was speed, before Sheba could consolidate his forces and establish a strong defensive position.

Escape us. Literally, "take away our eye." Several interpretations have been given to this passage. The KJV translators understood the phrase "take away our eye," as meaning, "eluding the eye." The LXX may be translated, "cast a shadow over our eyes." However, the Targums read, "cause us harm," from which the RSV takes its rendering, "cause us trouble."

7. Joab's men. David had made a desperate effort to deprive Joab of his command, but the army was still largely his and the men still acknowledged allegiance to him.

The Cherethites, and the Pelethites. These men formed the special bodyguard of David (see on ch. 15:18). They constituted a small body of well-trained men whose loyalty could be absolutely depended upon. To send them out into the battle shows the extreme gravity of the situation, for it would leave David largely unprotected in Jerusalem.

All the mighty men. This was a special body of heroes, men who had particularly distinguished themselves during David's early days as an outlaw and later as king (see ch. 23:8–39).

8. Gideon. A town nearly 6 mi. (9.6 km.) northwest of Jerusalem, now *ej-Jib*.

Went before them. Or, "came into their presence." It seems that Amasa gathered his troops and followed Abishai northward.

It fell out. The details are not entirely clear. Joab was wearing a military cloak bound about with a girdle into which he had thrust his dagger. As he was walking along, the dagger dropped out. Some think he stooped down and picked it up with his left hand as

Amasa appeared. Others think that he may have had another weapon, concealed, and dropped his sword to make it appear that he was unarmed.

9. *With the right hand.* Joab's act of taking his cousin by the beard and kissing him was evidently a common form of salutation among kinsmen.

10. *Took no heed.* Everything happened so quickly and Joab's actions seemed so guileless that Amasa had no suspicion of treachery.

In the fifth rib. He struck him in the abdomen and disemboweled him (see on ch. 2:23).

So Joab and Abishai. With Amasa dead, there was no question as to who was now commander in chief of the forces of David, regardless of the king's command. Amasa had been given the post (v. 4), and then Abishai was sent forth with the available troops (v. 6). But now Joab simply stepped into his old position, and without asking any questions continued the pursuit of Sheba.

11. *One of Joab's men.* The important item of the moment was the swift pursuit of Sheba and the putting down of the rebellion. Once that object had been achieved Joab felt that he would be in a position to make his peace with David. In the meantime, however, there was the matter of Amasa, who lay on the ground wallowing in his own blood (v. 12). Joab stationed one of his trusted men on the spot who raised a cry that would make it appear that Amasa had himself been slain because of treachery to the cause of David, and that it was now Joab who was leading the pursuit of the rebels to the end that David might be assured his throne. Joab's loyalty to David was well known to the men in the present conflict, and they also remembered Amasa as the man in command of the forces of Absalom, against whom they had been so recently arrayed. These men had little confidence in Amasa, and were probably happy to have him out of the way. Joab, of course, slew Amasa because he could not brook him as a rival and because he was determined to continue in his old position.

12. *When the man saw.* As the soldiers in pursuit of Sheba saw that Amasa was dead they naturally stopped and questioned. This was interfering with the pursuit; hence, Amasa's body was removed from the road. The men now arriving at this spot continued on their way, simply following the men before them.

14. *And he.* That is, Sheba.

Unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah. This was probably Abel-beth-maachah, in the far north of Israel, a fortified town in the tribe of Naphtali (1 Kings 15:20; 2 Kings 15:29). It is believed to be the modern *Tell Abil*, situated on a knoll west of the headwaters of the Jordan, about 12 mi. north of Lake Huleh, near Dan.

All the Berites. This may be the name of a family or clan living in the vicinity of Abel-beth-maachah. Nothing else is known of them. Some believe the Bichrites, the members of Sheba's clan, are here referred to. Sheba was a son of Bichri (v. 1).

After him. They went after Sheba. Evidently Sheba was gathering strength here in this northern region, and if left alone would soon be in a position to put up a formidable struggle against David's forces.

15. *Besieged him.* Sheba had had time enough to establish himself in a fortified town that could be taken only by siege.

Cast up a bank. See 2 Kings 19:32; Isa. 37:33. This was a common method of siege warfare in the ancient Orient. The weakest part of a wall was the part near the top, which might be made of only mud bricks, whereas the bottom would be of stone. A bank of

earth would be thrown up against the wall, and siege engines, if such were employed, mounted on it. In this way a hole could be battered through the wall and the city entered.

Trench. Heb. *chel*, “a rampart.” Some take *chel* to refer to a fortified area between a lower outer wall and the main wall of the city, or the outer wall itself, or the glacis, others, by metonymy, to a moat or ditch. With a bank thrown up in this area, against the main wall itself, the besiegers would be in position to make their final attack.

Battered the wall. It is doubtful whether the forces of David were in possession of siege engines, such as battering-rams. These were common in later years with the Assyrian and Babylonian armies and gave these peoples their great success.

16. A wise woman. The woman asked for a conference with Joab. Her city was about to be deluged with blood for the sake of one man who was in revolt against David. This did not appear reasonable to her.

19. To destroy a city. Joab’s war against Sheba had become a war against Abel, and that ancient city, with its peaceful inhabitants, was now in danger of destruction.

22. All the people. The woman proved herself to be wise indeed. She went to the people whose interests and existence were at stake and discussed the issues with them. If she had gone to Sheba, she would doubtless have gained nothing for the people and only trouble for herself. If nothing had been done, the inhabitants of Abel would have had to pay the price for Sheba’s selfishness and ambition.

Blew a trumpet. The signal for the end of hostilities (see chs. 2:28; 18:16).

His tent. His home (see on ch. 18:17).

23. Joab was over all the host. David’s officers are listed in vs. 23–26. There are some changes from the officers listed earlier (ch. 8:16–18). Joab retained his position as commander in chief after the rebellion of Sheba had been suppressed.

Benaiah. Benaiah continued in command of David’s bodyguard (see 2 Sam. 8:18; 1 Chron. 18:17). He was one of the mighty men of David, who had distinguished himself by slaying “two lionlike men of Moab” (2 Sam. 23:20).

24. Over the tribute. Literally, “over the labor gang” (see 1 Kings 5:14, where the same Hebrew word here translated “tribute” is translated “levy”). This office is not mentioned in the earlier list in 2 Sam. 8:16–18 or in 1 Chron. 18:14–17, and it seems to have been created only toward the close of David’s reign. The same office was held by “Adoniram the son of Abda” (1 Kings 4:6) during Solomon’s reign and by “Adoram” during the early part of the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:18). It is possible that these different texts all refer to the same individual. The system of forced labor came to be such a thorn in the flesh of the Israelites during Solomon’s reign that Adoram was stoned to death during the early difficulties of Rehoboam’s reign when the northern tribes revolted (1 Kings 12:18).

Jehoshaphat. Mentioned in the early list of David’s officers. He still held the same office during the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 4:3). For his work, see on 2 Sam. 8:16.

25. Zadok and Abiathar. Earlier Zadok and “Ahimelech the son of Abiathar” were named as the priests (ch. 8:17). The present list, however, is for a later period of David’s reign, and it is surprising, therefore, to see that the son seems to have preceded his father as priest. For a discussion of these men see on ch. 8:17.

26. Ira also the Jairite. This officer is not listed in ch. 8:16–18 nor in 1 Chron. 18:14–17. It has been conjectured that “Ira an Ithrite,” listed among David’s mighty men in 2 Sam. 23:38, may be the same man, but the Word is silent on this point.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–22PP 746

CHAPTER 21

1 *The three years' famine for the Gibeonites ceaseth, by hanging seven of Saul's sons. 10 Rizpah's kindness unto the dead. 12 David burieth the bones of Saul and Jonathan in his father's sepulchre. 15 Four battles against the Philistines, wherein four valiants of David slay four giants.*

1. Then there was a famine. Literally, “And there was a famine.”

In the days of David. This phrase is too vague to warrant the conclusion that this famine must have followed immediately the events of ch. 20. There is no evidence as to exactly when this famine took place. There is no reason to doubt that it was one of the troubles that beset David toward the close of his reign, although it could have happened at any time after David's kindness to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth (v. 7). Not all the events in David's reign are recorded in strict chronological sequence.

Enquired of the Lord. David concluded that there must be some reason for the famine. The Lord had told His people that if they were disobedient He would withhold His blessings (Deut. 28:15, 23, 24), and David now sought the Lord for the reason for this present famine.

He slew the Gibeonites. This is the only record of Saul's offense against the Gibeonites. At the time of the conquest of Canaan the Gibeonites had succeeded through guile in making a league with Joshua. According to the terms of this league they were to be allowed to live with Israel in a state of servitude (Joshua 9:3–27).

2. The Amorites. According to Joshua 9:7; 11:19 the people of Gibeon were Hivites, who in many enumerations of the native inhabitants of Palestine are listed separately from the Amorites (Gen. 10:16, 17; Joshua 9:1; 11:3; 12:8). But the term “Amorite” is often employed in a more comprehensive sense, somewhat equivalent to “Canaanite,” as meaning any of the inhabitants of Canaan (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 1:27). “Amorites” sometimes denotes more particularly the inhabitants of the hill country of Palestine as distinct from the Canaanites of the plain (Num. 13:29; Deut. 1:7, 20). The Hivites would thus be included in this latter usage of “Amorites” to mean hill dwellers of Canaan.

Had sworn unto them. See Joshua 9:15, 19–21. Joshua, together with the princes of the congregation, had made a solemn oath that the Gibeonites would not be slain but that they would be permitted to abide in the land. The leaders of Israel regarded themselves as bound by this solemn oath, and accordingly they would realize that serious consequences must inevitably follow if they violated the oath.

To the children of Israel. Or, “for the children of Israel.” In this offense Saul was not alone. As the king of Israel he was acting with the people and in their behalf. The people were doubtless in sympathy with him in his campaign to exterminate the Gibeonites, and thus the guilt rested upon them as well as upon the king. This would explain why the Lord allowed the punishment for Saul's offense to fall upon David and his people. The whole nation was involved in the violation of the solemn oath given by Joshua and the princes of the congregation more than 400 years before. Under the cloak of Saul's nationalistic zeal existed a spirit of selfishness, pride, and arrogance that was utterly foreign to the humility, disinterestedness, and loftiness of purpose that God required of His children.

3. *Wherewith shall I make the atonement?* David should have addressed this question to God, even as he had addressed the previous inquiry concerning the cause of the famine. The record does not state that David took this matter to the Lord, nor does it affirm that what the Gibeonites demanded and what David carried out in response was in harmony with what God would have required in order to rectify the situation.

Saul's offense had been a gross misrepresentation of the religion of Jehovah. His attitude probably reflected that of the Israelites at large, who, even after Saul's death, continued to show hostility to these foreigners in their midst whom they had pledged to protect. It was highly essential that the religion of God be vindicated. Precisely what God would have demanded by way of achieving this end is not revealed.

One of the chief objects of confessing faults to the ones harmed is to nullify to the greatest possible extent the evil influence of the misdeed. Men have become completely discouraged and their souls have been lost as a result of the errors of their fellow men. It is the duty of the one who has been the stumbling block to try to remove the cause of offense to the best of his ability.

Bless the inheritance. Unless the offense against the Gibeonites were removed, Israel could not hope to enjoy the blessing of the Lord. Hence if the wrong against the Gibeonites were atoned for, these people would prove to be the means of bringing back blessings to the nation of Israel.

4. *No silver nor gold of Saul.* The smiting of the Gibeonites probably involved the confiscation of their property. It was only right that in a sincere effort to make restitution, what had been taken from them should be returned. The Gibeonites insisted, however, that they were not concerned with worldly goods. They were willing to forgo the matter of restitution in kind.

Kill any man in Israel. Israel as a nation was responsible for the slaughter of the Gibeonites at the hand of Saul. But the people as a whole would not now be asked to pay the price of the blood that had been shed. The Gibeonites were of the opinion that the guilt should rest primarily upon the house of Saul and that by it expiation should be made.

5. *Consumed us.* Saul must have wrought widespread havoc among the Gibeonites. As a people they were probably all but destroyed, with only a remnant remaining, probably scattered here and there throughout the land. Since Saul was primarily responsible for this crime, the Gibeonites now asked that his house should carry the blame.

6. *Hang them up.* The Gibeonites may have had in mind the incident recorded in Num. 25:4, where the heads of the people guilty of the crime of Baal-peor were to be hung "up before the Lord," that "the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel." The present situation was different, however, for instead of the guilty themselves being punished, the children were substituted.

Gibeah. The LXX reads "Gibeon," which some regard as correct (see RSV). However, there is good reason to retain the reading of the Hebrew text. Gibeah was the home of Saul. (1 Sam. 10:26; 11:4). It would seem fitting that expiation for Saul's crime be made at his ancestral home. It is true that at that time there was a national shrine at Gibeon, the place where the tabernacle then stood and where the Israelites offered sacrifices (1 Kings 3:4; 1 Chron. 16:39, 40; 2 Chron. 1:3). But there is no reason to believe that the execution of these descendants of Saul was regarded as a propitiatory

human sacrifice and that it therefore had to be carried out at Gibeon, as if it would be more acceptable there.

7. *Because of the Lord's oath.* See 1 Sam. 18:3; 20:12–17. The solemn oath that David had sworn to Jonathan required that he exempt the son of Jonathan from the proposed vengeance of Gibeon. The fact that the violation of the solemn oath of the leaders of Israel to the men of Gibeon (Joshua 9:15, 19–21), had brought this great calamity upon Israel, would cause David to be particularly careful that there would be no violation of the oath he had made to Jonathan.

8. *Two sons of Rizpah.* Rizpah was one of the concubines of Saul, with whom Abner had been charged with committing adultery (ch. 3:7).

Whom she brought up. Literally, “whom she bore.” There is no valid reason for is translating the Hebrew verb, *yalad*, employed in this phrase, “to bring up.” The difficulty, of course, is that Adriel was the husband of Merab, not of Michal (1 Sam. 18:19). The simplest solution seems to be to accept the reading of two Hebrew manuscripts, one of the recensions of the LXX, and the Syriac, which here read “Merob” for “Michal.” Merab was the one who was originally to be given to David, but who was given to Adriel instead, David receiving Michal (1 Sam. 18:20–27). Unless Michal had children through her marriage to Phalti (1 Sam. 25:44), she died childless (2 Sam. 6:23).

9. *Beginning of barley harvest.* This was immediately after the Passover (Lev. 23:10, 11, 14), and would be the middle to the end of our April.

10. *Took sackcloth.* The sackcloth was probably spread out as a tent to form a rough shelter for Rizpah during her long vigil.

Until water dropped. The usual dry season in Palestine lasted from spring until fall. Under normal conditions there would be no rain during this period (see p. 110). Whether at this time an unreasonable rainfall occurred, breaking the drought that had probably been responsible for the three-year famine, we are not told. The wheat harvest follows the barley harvest (Ex. 9:31, 32; Ruth 1:22; 2:23), and rain is exceedingly rare at that season (1 Sam. 12:17, 18; Prov. 26:1). The recording of this incident indicates that Rizpah's devoted watch was of long duration.

Neither the birds. The bodies of the slain men were left exposed to the elements. Ordinarily bodies of men who were thus executed were to be buried the day they were hanged (Deut. 21:22, 23), but in this instance their bodies were apparently left exposed, perhaps till such a time as the fall of rain would give evidence of God's restored blessing. In the East a body left in the open would almost immediately become the victim of wild beasts or flocks of vultures (see 1 Sam. 17:44, 46; 1 Kings 14:11; 16:4; 21:23, 24; Matt. 24:28). Through this long ordeal, day and night, Rizpah kept a devoted vigil over the bodies of her sons.

12. *Bones of Saul.* It was the tender devotion of Rizpah that caused David to show this respect for the descendants of Saul (see v. 13). Wishing to show that he cherished no enmity against the former king, David brought the bones of Saul and Jonathan from Jabesh-gilead and gave them an honorable burial in the ancient family sepulcher.

The street. Literally, “the broad open place,” “the plaza.” According to 1 Sam. 31:10–12 the Philistines fastened the bodies of Saul and his sons to the “wall of Bethshan,” evidently on the section of the wall facing the public square. It was from this place that they were recovered at night by the men of Jabesh-gilead (1 Sam. 31:11–13).

14. Zelah. A town of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28). It has not yet been identified but was probably near Gibeah, the ancestral home of Saul (see p. 459).

God was intreated. 2 Sam. 24:25; Gen. 25:21; Isa. 19:22 for similar expressions. Because the text states that “God was intreated” we need not therefore conclude that David had followed God’s plan for atoning for Saul’s evil deed. The Lord might measure an act by the sincerity of heart that prompted it, even though He condemned the act itself.

15. Yet war again. This refers to another war that David had with the Philistines. The writer of Samuel is here giving a number of detached items of which the exact relationship to other events in David’s reign is not known. The incident evidently took place after David had been ruling for some time and was therefore quite advanced in years (v. 17). In 1 Chron. 20:4–8 the parallel account of these struggles with the Philistines, except the first, follows the account of Joab’s destruction of Rabbah of Ammon, which the writer of 2 Samuel places in ch. 12:26–31. The intervening items of 2 Samuel—namely, Ammon’s sin (ch. 13), the return of Absalom from Geshur (ch. 14), the revolts of Absalom (chs. 15–19) and Sheba (ch. 20) and the three-year famine (ch. 21:1–14)—are not found in Chronicles.

16. Three hundred shekels. About 7 lb. (3.4 kg.). The weight of the head of Goliath’s spear was 600 shekels (1 Sam. 17:7).

17. Quench not the light. See 1 Kings 11:36; 15:14; Ps. 132:17. David had frequently endangered his life by engaging in personal combat with his enemies. There came a time, however, when it was no longer wise or necessary for the king to venture into battle with his soldiers, as had been his custom.

18. At Gob. In the parallel text this incident is said to have taken place at Gezer (1 Chron. 20:4). The site of Gob is not known, but it probably was in the neighborhood of Gezer, a strongly fortified bastion overlooking the Philistine plain about 7 mi. (11.2 km.) northeast of Ekron, near the Valley of Aijalon. It is possible that by the time the account in Chronicles was written, the hamlet of Gob had already become almost unknown and that the writer gave the geographical setting in terms of the much better known town of Gezer, now *Tell Jezer*.

Sibbechai. This name also occurs in the list of David’s heroes (1 Chron. 11:29), but in 2 Sam. 23:27 the name appears as “Mebunnai.” He was the captain of the eighth division of David’s army (1 Chron. 27:11).

Saph. Spelled “Sippai” in the parallel text (1 Chron. 20:4). The statement is also added there that the Philistines were subdued.

19. In Gob. The name of this place is omitted in the parallel passage (1 Chron. 20:5).

Jaare-oregim. Or Jair (1 Chron. 20:5).

The brother of. These words do not appear in the Hebrew of this verse but are taken from the parallel passage (1 Chron. 20:5), where also the name of Goliath’s brother is given as Lahmi.

21. Defied. The same word that is used in 1 Sam. 17:26, 36, 45.

Jonathan. He was thus a nephew of David (see 1 Chron. 20:7; 1 Sam. 16:9), and a brother of Jonadab, the “very subtil man” who was the friend of Amnon (2 Sam. 13:3).

22. Born to the giant. If the word “giant” is considered a collective noun or as designating a certain clan, these four were not necessarily brothers, but simply descendants of the race of the giants in Gath.

His servants. Heb. *'ebed*, the usual word for “slave” or “servant.” *'Ebed* is from the root *'abad*, meaning “to work” or “to serve.” As here used, the term refers to those who served David as soldiers.

CHAPTER 22

A psalm of thanksgiving for God's powerful deliverance, and manifold blessings.

1. This song. The song also appears, with numerous slight variations, as Ps. 18. The first verse occurs as the title of that psalm. Certain other psalms that deal with incidents in David's life carry titles that explain the historical setting of those psalms (cf. Ex. 15:1; Deut. 31:30; Judges 5:1).

All his enemies. David wrote this psalm after God had granted him a remarkable deliverance out of the hand of his enemies. That would not seem to have been until after the great victory over the children of Ammon and their allies (see chs. 8, 10). It also appears that the composition came while David could still speak before the people of his righteousness and the cleanness of his hands (ch. 22:21), which must have been before his sin against Bath-sheba and Uriah (ch. 11; cf. PP 716).

Out of the hand of Saul. These words tend to substantiate that the psalm does not belong to the last days of David's reign, even though it here appears toward the close of the record of that reign. David's deliverance from the hand of Saul, with his victory over the remnants of his house, was sufficiently recent to have been set forth by David as one of the reasons for the writing of the psalm. That observation would seem to require that the psalm be written some considerable time before the close of David's reign.

2. And he said. These words appear as the last words of the title in Ps. 18. In that psalm, however, the opening words are: “I will love thee, O Lord, my strength.” This sentence does not appear here. David's expression of his deep and tender love for God forms a fitting introduction to the psalm as a whole.

The Lord is my rock. This expression is typical of David. As a fugitive from Saul, David had often found the rocks of the mountains a refuge and strength. God was to him as the strength of the rocks, providing him protection and deliverance from his enemies. The style of the psalm is particularly characteristic of David, full of grandeur, strength, and vigor. The whole spirit of David pervades the psalm, from beginning to end. He had lived so close to the eternal hills, the rocks had so long been his abode, they had come to form an intrinsic part of his life and existence. It became second nature for him to weave these figures from the natural world into the songs that poured from his heart.

3. Trust. Literally, “seek refuge.” This is the note of courage struck by David in Ps. 7 and 11. David had learned to place his faith and confidence in God. He knew that whatever man might do, God would never fail him. God was as sure as the rocks of the eternal hills. Man could place his complete trust in Him.

My shield. To anyone not a man of war the figure of a shield would have little value or meaning. To David the shield had frequently meant life itself. He knew from the most vivid of personal experiences its supreme importance in some of the critical moments of life. As his faithful shield had often warded off the thrusts of his enemies that were intended to lay him low, so God had repeatedly saved him from the enemy of his soul. The figure is characteristic of David. His songs live and breathe the spirit of the warlike life that was his as a soldier accustomed to battle.

The horn of my salvation. See Luke 1:69. The horn was a symbol of strength and power. The figure refers to the horns of beasts, that serve both to repulse and to make attacks (see 1 Sam. 2:1, 10; Ps. 75:10; 89:17; 92:10; 112:9). God was the horn of David's salvation in that He provided him not only with protection and defense but with help and strength in active battle against his enemies.

My high tower. A mountain stronghold. In the wilds of the hills such a place was lofty, inaccessible, and safe from attack. From its heights a view could be obtained of all the surrounding area. It provided warning of approaching danger and also was a point of vantage from which to repel attacks.

My refuge, my saviour. These words are not found in Ps. 18:2. They explain the preceding declarations about God, showing how He was regarded by David. In time of need, David could flee to Him for refuge, and could look to Him as a Saviour from foes seen and unseen.

4. Worthy to be praised. The ascription of praise to the One worthy to receive it is a prominent feature in many of the psalms.

5. The waves of death. "The sorrows of death" (Ps. 18:4). David is here thinking of the dangers pressing about him, ever ready to engulf him as with a flood.

Floods of ungodly men. Literally, "the floods of Belial"—a personification of destructive wickedness. The "torrents of perdition" (RSV) were constantly sweeping about David, seeming to cut off every means of escape. He realized that Satan was warring against both his life and his soul, and that evil men, used as tools of the evil one, were ever arrayed against him.

Made me afraid. Even the greatest heroes are at times haunted by fear.

6. Hell. Heb. *she'ol*, the figurative realm of the dead. The term has nothing to do with a place of torment. David often experienced the nearness of death. Hardship, peril, persecution, and distress were his daily experience. These drew him close to God.

7. Upon the Lord. Constantly surrounded by perils, David came to realize, as few men have, his continual need of the protecting hand of God. Danger caused him to pray and to look to the Lord for help. The perilous life he lived helped to confirm his deep religious experience. His anxieties drew him to God and gave him a personal acquaintance with the Lord's constant guidance and care.

Out of his temple. From God's heavenly dwelling place He looks down upon men in their distress and sends them the needed grace and strength. David recognized the temple of heaven as the abiding place of God: "The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven" (Ps. 11:4).

8. Shook and trembled. Verses 8–16 contain a strikingly beautiful and impressive picture of God. The passage is unsurpassed in sublimity and solemnity in its description of the might and power of God. The picture is one of a terrible storm and earthquake, accompanied by dense smoke and darkness, the outbursts of lightning and deafening peals of thunder, revealing to David the personal presence of God. Undoubtedly the picture came as a result of personal experience, when to David, out in the open, exposed to the elements, and perhaps battling for his very life against his foes, was revealed the nearness of God in the salvation He brings to His own. The scene is reminiscent of the terrors accompanying the solemn giving of the law on Sinai (Ex. 19:16–18).

Because he was wrath. By a figure of speech the dreadful shaking of the earth and the terrible commotions in heaven are pictured as the result of the awful wrath of God.

9. *Smoke out of his nostrils.* In poetic imagery the spectacular forces of nature are pictured as proceeding from God to carry out their divinely appointed work of destruction.

10. *Bowed the heavens.* As in a storm the clouds descend, seeming to rest upon trees and hills, so God is pictured as bending the heavens in His wrath.

12. *Darkness pavilions round about him.* “He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters” (Ps. 18:11). The picture is of God taking up His abode in the threatening darkness of the storm. There He sits, unseen but near, executing vengeance upon His enemies (see Deut. 4:11; Ps. 97:2).

13. *Through the brightness.* Against the darkness of the storm appear blinding flashes of lightning.

14. *The Lord thundered.* Immediately after the lightning (v. 13) the crash of thunder is heard bringing down the judgments of God upon His enemies. Ps. 18:13 adds: “hail stones and coals of fire.”

15. *He sent out arrows.* These flashes of lightning, followed by peals of thunder, are also pictured in Ps. 77:17, 18. God is portrayed in poetic imagery as a warrior sending forth His arrows for the destruction of His enemies (see Deut. 32:23; Job 6:4; Ps. 7:12, 13; 38:2; Lam. 3:12, 13).

Discomfited them. The Lord accomplishes the utter rout of His enemies, and His warfare against them results in their complete destruction (see Ex. 23:27; Joshua 10:10; Judges 4:15, 16; 1 Sam. 7:10).

16. *The breath of his nostrils.* See Ex. 15:8, where in a poetical description of the Exodus, Moses pictures the Lord blowing back the waters of the Red Sea by a blast of His nostrils, causing the depths to be “congealed in the heart of the sea.”

17. *Out of many waters.* Leaving his description of the wrath of God manifesting itself in the storm, David now describes the deliverance God had wrought for him (vs. 17–20). David was delivered as from a sea of troubles.

18. *My strong enemy.* David here possibly refers directly to the Ammonites and their powerful allies (ch. 10).

19. *They prevented me.* Literally, “they confronted me.”

20. *Into a large place.* In contrast with the exceedingly narrow straits occasioned by the attacks of his enemies. Through God’s help the power of the adversaries was broken and David was delivered.

Delighted in me. David here gives the reason why God granted victory to him and not to his enemies. This was not an arbitrary favoritism; but God was able to work marvelously for His servant because David was cooperating with the program of heaven (see vs. 21–28).

21. *According to my righteousness.* Anciently God promised the blessings of health and prosperity as an immediate reward for obedience (Deut. 28:1–14).

The cleanness of my hands. The hands are the instruments of action. The Lord looks upon the deeds of men as well as their hearts (Ps. 15:2–5; 24:4, 5). At the time when these words were written David could speak openly of the cleanness of his hands, but that was not possible after his sin against Bath-sheba and Uriah the Hittite. We may have here an indication that this psalm was written after the defeat of the Ammonites and their allies (2 Sam. 10) but before David’s sin with Bath-sheba (ch. 11; see on ch. 11:1).

25. *According to.* See on v. 21.

26. *With the merciful.* In the previous verse David has been setting forth the reason for God's rewards to him. Now he lays down a general principle, again showing that the Lord had displayed no particular favoritism to him, that indeed God will extend the same mercies and favors to all who will show themselves merciful and upright. God's rewards are conditioned by man's attitude toward Him and his conduct toward his fellow men. However, the experience of Job illustrates that there may be apparent exceptions to this general principle. Because of the involvements of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, affliction is at times permitted to come upon the righteous in spite of their righteousness.

27. *Shew thyself unsavoury.* To the perverse, God appears perverse. The wicked feel that He is unkind and unjust in His dealings toward them, when actually He is just, for He allows them to reap as they themselves have sown and permits the same treatment to befall them as they have accorded to others. Yet through it all God seeks to save them (see 24>Lev. 26:23, 24, 40–45).

29. *For thou art my lamp.* "Thou wilt light my candle" (Ps. 18:28). This verse introduces another section of the psalm. (2 Sam. 22:29–46) in which David tells what the Lord has done and will do for him (see Ps. 132:17; 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4).

30. *Troop.* Heb. *gedud*. A division of the army or a group of light-armed men sent against an enemy country for purposes of plunder, such as the Amalekites, who burned Ziklag (1 Sam. 30:8, 15). Against such hostile bands David had repeatedly been victorious through the help of the Lord. It required speed, courage, and power to crush such forces, and this ability had been given to David by God.

Leaped over a wall. With God's help no barrier was able to stop David in his pursuit of the enemy.

31. *Perfect.* Heb. *tamim*, "complete," "whole" "entire." The emphasis of the Hebrew is not, as is the English, upon flawlessness, but upon completeness.

A buckler. Or a "shield" as in v. 3. God offers protection to all who place their trust in Him.

32. *For who is God?* There was only one God, and that was Jehovah. That being so, His enemies were left to their own devices, whereas He had all the power of heaven at His command.

Who is a rock? Who is trustworthy, firm, immovable, and sure, save our God?

33. *God is my strength.* The man who does not lean upon the Lord is no stronger than himself, but the man who trusts in the Lord has with him all the strength of heaven.

34. *Like hinds' feet.* Among the rough crags and the bewildering trails of the mountains the feet of the hind were swift and sure. In the tortuous paths that it was given to David to follow, God had caused him to walk sure-footedly and safely.

35. *Teacheth my hands to war.* David was a skillful and successful warrior, and in this he ascribes his success to God. He did not engage in selfish or ruthless warfare, but fought the battles of the Lord, and thus he could look to God for skill as well as protection and guidance.

A bow of steel. Literally, "a bow of bronze." Ancient warriors were proud of their strength in bending the bow. The Lord had given David strength and skill to wield successfully the weapons of war.

36. *The shield of thy salvation.* See Eph. 6:17: “helmet of salvation.” The best protection that any man can have for any of the dangers of life is the saving power of God.

Gentleness. Heb. ‘*anoth*, literally, “to respond.” The meaning is obscure. Ps. 18:35 has ‘*anawah*, literally, “humility,” which is obviously the correct reading. God’s kind and gentle condescension (see Ps. 113:6, 7) manifested to the meek and humble of earth (Isa. 57:15; 66:2) enables them to rise to the greatest heights of honor and achievement.

37. *Enlarged my steps.* In strait and narrow places Thou hast given me free room so that I was able to advance without hindrance. “When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble” (Prov. 4:12; cf. Ps. 31:8).

Feet. Literally, “ankles.” God gave the psalmist power to walk in dangerous places with a firm and even step; his ankles did not waver nor his feet slip.

39. *Under my feet.* Ancient artists frequently pictured victors standing over their enemies who lay dead beneath their feet or beneath the feet of their horses. The picture here is not one of conquest and dominion but of casting down an enemy and passing over him.

40. *Them that rose up.* In David’s career enemies were constantly rising up against him, but the Lord caused them to fall before the king’s might.

41. *Given me the necks.* Or “given me the back of the necks.” The expression means that the enemies had been put to flight before him, having turned their backs on him. Compare, “I will make all thine enemies turn their backs [Hebrew, “necks”] unto thee” (Ex. 23:27).

43. *As the dust.* David’s enemies were pulverized as dust, their power being changed into impotence. Ps. 18:42 has: “as the dust before the wind,” thus adding the thought of scattering the adversary as dust is scattered before the wind.

As the mire of the street. Another expression denoting completeness of victory. Not only were the enemies of David crushed to dust, they were trodden underneath his feet (see Isa. 10:6; Zech. 10:5; Mal. 4:3).

44. *The strivings of my people.* Ps. 18:43 has, “strivings of the people,” as does also the LXX of 2 Sam. 22:44. Since David is leading up to a climax of complete victory over his foreign foes (2 Sam. 22:44–46), some have thought it hardly likely that he would here be dealing with domestic difficulties. The wars of his people in which he was here engaged were wars that they were carrying on against other nations.

Head of the heathen. In his victory over the heathen, David had become their master and was receiving tribute from them. It was not the plan of God that the world should continue to be divided into many states constantly engaged in war against one another, but that they should ultimately be united into one nation under one king, with Jerusalem as the capital. But the Israelites refused to cooperate in God’s plan to make them the leaders and light bearers to the Gentiles. They were rebellious and proud, and in many respects no better than their heathen neighbors. Finally God rejected them and took away their privilege.

Yet under the Messiah to come as the Seed of David and through the true Israel of God—the spiritual seed of Abraham—that plan will receive a degree of fulfillment, yet different in many respects from the original design (see Rom. 9:6–8; PK 713, 714).

Which I knew not. See Isa. 55:5.

45. *Shall submit themselves.* Literally, “shall come cringing.”

47. *The Lord liveth.* David here comes to the concluding section of his song (vs. 47–51). On the ground of the victories that the Lord has given him he ascribes praise and thanksgiving to God. The Lord had not forgotten him or forsaken him—He was ever present, the living God (Ps. 42:2; Isa. 37:4, 17; Jer. 10:10; Hosea 1:10; 1 Tim. 6:17), the one “who only hath immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16). God was more than a theory or a mere abstraction to David—he had learned to know Him as a personal Friend and Saviour, and he now expresses his grateful praise to Him for His wonderful deliverance and care.

The rock of my salvation. See Ps. 89:26. David again recalls What God means to him; He is both his rock and his salvation, the God who is his strength and defense and who brings salvation to him.

48. *Avengeth me.* God lives and cares. He did not leave David a helpless victim in the hands of his enemies, but executed justice for him (see Ps. 94:1; Luke 18:7).

49. *Bringeth me forth.* Repeatedly David found himself surrounded by his enemies and seemingly helpless and within their power. But God would grant him deliverance, bringing him victoriously out of their midst and placing them under subjection to him.

The violent man. Some commentators think that this phrase applies specifically to Saul, but the application is probably general. The whole content of the song, particularly the closing section, makes it seem that David is not thinking here specifically of Saul but of his enemies in general. These men were certainly men of violence, and if they could have gotten David within their power, they would have dealt cruelly with him. From such men the Lord had graciously granted David deliverance.

50. *Therefore.* The “therefore” links David’s giving of thanks to the preceding narration of God’s mercies to him. The secret of David’s deep religious experience lay in the fact that he constantly kept in mind the mercies he had received from God and never ceased thanking the Lord for them.

Among the heathen. The signal victories given to David exalted the power of Israel’s God before the nations. Paul quotes this verse to illustrate how the knowledge of God would go to the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel (Rom. 15:9). God planned that Israel should be His evangel of salvation. The psalmist frequently spoke of the glory that would come to Israel if she would accomplish her high destiny. He looked forward to the time when all the earth would worship God and sing praises to Him (Ps. 66:4), and when all the kings of the earth would fall down before Him and all nations would serve Him (Ps. 72:11). Hence the psalmist called upon Israel to “declare among the people his doings” (Ps. 9:11) and “his glory among the heathen” (Ps. 96:3), and expressed his own intention to praise God among the people and to sing unto Him among the nations (Ps. 57:9). See also Ps. 105:1; Isa. 12:4.

51. *Tower of salvation.* Ps. 18:50 reads: “Great deliverance giveth he to his king.” The meaning is clear: the Lord bestows the fullness of His salvation upon the king, granting to him ever greater triumphs over his enemies.

To his seed. There seems to be a reference to the prophecy of Nathan in ch. 7:12–16, that after David fell asleep the Lord would set up his seed after him and establish the throne of his kingdom forever. For this great mercy David is now thanking the Lord. The whole psalm is a grand anthem of praise and thanksgiving, a beautiful and heartfelt expression of David’s confidence in God and of his grateful acceptance of the Lord’s assurance that He would give the kingdom to him and to his seed forever.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

CHAPTER 23

1 *David, in his last words, professeth his faith in God's promises to be beyond sense or experience.* 6 *The different state of the wicked.* 8 *A catalogue of David's mighty men.*

1. The last words of David. This chapter consists of two distinct parts. Verses 1–7 are a psalm that constitutes the last formal utterance of David, and vs. 8–39 are a list of his heroes. The song is not found in the book of Psalms.

Said. Heb. *ne'um*, a divine utterance either directly by God or through His prophets. The word is not used to designate ordinary human speech. It occurs most frequently in the phrase “saith the Lord.” False prophets used the word in order to make it appear that they were giving divine messages (Jer. 23:31).

Raised up on high. David was a man of humble beginnings whom the Lord chose and raised to his lofty position as prophet and king (see 2 Sam. 7:8, 9; Ps. 78:70; 89:27).

Sweet psalmist of Israel. These words are a fitting description of the man who wrote not only this song but also many psalms that have proved an inspiration to men of all ages.

2. Spirit of the Lord. The message was not David's own personal utterance. The fact that the Holy Spirit spoke justifies the use of the word *ne'um* (see on v. 1).

In my tongue. See Jer. 1:9; cf. 2 Peter 1:21.

3. The Rock of Israel spake. This phrase, parallel to the one preceding, marks the poetic style of this song. Compare also the parallel phrases in v. 2.

Must be just. The “must be” has been supplied. The sense of the Hebrew is, “he that ruleth righteously.” The blessedness of a righteous ruler is extolled rather than a ruler being admonished to rule righteously.

In the fear of God. “The powers that be are ordained of God,” and he that holds office is a “minister of God” (Rom. 13:1, 4). Every man who rules should, therefore, do so in the constant fear of God, always conscious that he rules by divine appointment and that Heaven holds him responsible for his every decision.

4. As the light. See Ps. 89:36. The man who rules for God will be as the sun, bringing to the earth light, warmth, and blessing.

The tender grass. The verdure of earth comes as a result of the ministry of sunshine and showers. So the man who rules is able to bring a train of blessings if he carries out his responsibilities justly and in the fear of God.

5. Be not so. Some commentators express this clause in the form of a question: “And it is not a fact that my house stands thus with God?” Because David endeavored to rule justly and wisely, in the constant fear of God, the Lord promised to establish his house forever. The promise was conditional, and the conditions were not met by his literal posterity. Hence only through Christ as the seed of David will these promises now meet fulfillment.

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Sa 14:11). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Make it not to grow. Some suggest that this clause, in harmony with the first, should likewise be in the interrogative: “For will he not cause all my desire to prosper?” The affirmative form lacks meaning. A suggested paraphrase in harmony with this alteration is: “And is it not a fact that my house stands thus with God? For to this end He has made with me an everlasting covenant, that it may set in order all things, making them secure. And will He not thus bring my salvation to pass and cause all my desire to prosper?”

6. As thorns. In contrast to the establishment of David’s throne would be the sad fate of the men of Belial. Godless men would not enjoy the fruits of salvation, but they would be “as thorns thrust away,” cast aside as something utterly worthless, to be consumed and become as a thing of nought.

With hands. The wicked are like thorns that pierce the hands of those who endeavor to touch them. Thus ordinary means do not suffice to put them out of the way.

8. Of the mighty men. This verse introduces the second section of the chapter (vs. 8–39), which contains a list of the heroes of David. The same list, with some variations, appears in 1 Chron. 11:11–47. In Chronicles the list appears in the beginning of the account of David’s reign; here it comes at the close of that account. But it evidently dates from early in David’s reign (see on v. 24).

That sat in the seat. Some transliterate the Hebrew of these words, making them the proper name of the warrior, “Joshebbasshebeth” (see RSV). The name appears as “Jashobeam, an Hachmonite” in 1 Chron. 11:11. He had been with David at Ziklag (1 Chron. 12:1, 6).

Chief among the captains. See 1 Chron. 27:2, according to which he was captain of the first division of David’s army, which served during the first month of the year. See on 2 Kings 7:2 for a discussion of the word here translated “captains.”

Adino the Eznite. Instead of this phrase, Chronicles reads, “he lifted up his spear” (1 Chron. 11:11).

Eight hundred. 1 Chron. 11:11 has “three hundred.” It is impossible to tell which number is correct. One of the manuscripts of the Syriac reads “eight hundred” in Chronicles as well.

9. Dodo. Probably the same as Dodai, the commander of the second division of the army, which served during the second month (1 Chron. 27:4).

Defied the Philistines. Eleazar “was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together” (1 Chron. 11:13). Pas-dammim is also given as “Ephes-dammim” (1 Sam. 17:1). It was the place where the Philistines encamped when Goliath defied the armies of Israel and was slain by David.

10. Clave unto the sword. He had gripped his sword so hard and for so long that it was difficult to release it afterward.

11. Lentiles. 1 Chron. 11:13, 14 says “barley.” Perhaps both crops were represented. The encounter in question appears to have resulted from a raid made by Shammah on a parcel of ground from which the Philistines were probably foraging.

13. Three of the thirty. There were probably several groups of threes among the 30 heroes of David. Originally he seems to have had a group of exactly 30 heroes, but this number later increased as is seen by the 37 listed here (v. 39). The three here referred to were probably not the three previously mentioned, Jashobeam, Eleazar, and Shammah (vs. 8–11).

The valley of Rephaim. A valley southwest of Jerusalem (see on ch. 5:18).

17. The blood. The water secured at the risk of the life of these men was to David as the blood in which their life resided (see Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:10, 11).

18. Chief among three. This is the reading of the margin of the Hebrew Bible. The word for “three” in the text is either misspelled in the presently available manuscripts or incomplete. Several Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac read “thirty.” According to the translation of the KJV, Abishai was the first in the second triad (v. 19) and Benaiah (vs. 20, 22) was the second, with the third member not named. If Abishai was chief of the “thirty,” then Benaiah was *besides* the three, but he and Abishai were not equal to them.

20. Benaiah. The commander of David’s bodyguard (the Cherethites and Pelethites) all through David’s reign (ch. 8:18; 20:23) and the commander of David’s third division (1 Chron. 27:5, 6). He took a prominent part in the support of Solomon when Adonijah endeavored to take the throne and was given the post of commander in chief of Solomon’s army in place of Joab (1 Kings 1:8, 26, 32–39; 2:25–35; 4:4). His father, Jehoiada, is called a “chief priest” in 1 Chron. 27:5.

Kabzeel. A city on the extreme south of Judah, near the Edomite border (Joshua 15:21).

Lionlike men. Heb. *’ari’el*. Literally, “lion of God.” Two manuscripts of the LXX have “sons of Ariel.” Some think that Benaiah slew two sons of a Moabite king who was named Ariel.

Slew a lion. The slaying of a lion was regarded as a feat of great valor (see 1 Sam. 17:34–36).

21. A goodly man. “A man of great stature, five cubits high” (1 Chron. 11:23).

23. Over his guard. David’s bodyguard (see on v. 20).

24. Asahel. Since Asahel was slain by Abner while David reigned at Hebron (ch. 2:23), it is evident that this list comes from an early period in David’s reign. Asahel commanded David’s fourth division (1 Chron. 27:7).

25. Shammah the Harodite. Or, “Shammoth the Harorite” (1 Chron. 11:27), or, “Shamhuth the Izrahite” (1 Chron. 27:8), the commander of David’s fifth division.

26. Helez the Paltite. Or “Helez the Pelonite” (1 Chron. 11:27), the commander of the seventh division (1 Chron. 27:10).

Ira. Commander of the sixth division (1 Chron. 27:9). His home was at Tekoa, afterward the home of the prophet Amos (Amos 1:1), 5 mi. (8 km.) south of Bethlehem. Tekoa is now called *Teqû’*.

27. Abiezer. A native of Anathoth, afterward the home of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1), and commander of the ninth division (1 Chron. 27:12).

Mebunnai. Or “Sibbecai” (1 Chron. 11:29 and 27:11), commander of the eighth division. He was the slayer of the Philistine giant Saph (2 Sam. 21:18).

28. Zalmon. Or “Ilai” (1 Chron. 11:29).

Maharai. The commander of the tenth division (1 Chron. 27:13). Netophah was one of a cluster of villages near Bethlehem (1 Chron. 2:54; 9:16; Neh. 7:26; 12:28).

29. Heleb. Or “Heled” (1 Chron. 11:30) or “Heldai” (1 Chron. 27:15), commander of the 12th division.

30. Benaiah. An Ephraimite commander of the 11th division (1 Chron. 27:14).

Hiddai. Or “Hurai” (1 Chron. 11:32). In Hebrew *d* and *r* are so similar that the one letter can easily be mistaken for the other (see on 2 Sam. 8:12).

31. Abi-albon. Or, “Abiel” (1 Chron. 11:32).

32. *The sons of Jashen.* Or, “The sons of Hashem the Gizonite” (1 Chron. 11:34).

Jonathan. In 1 Chron. 11:34 this name appears with the following verse: “Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite.” One LXX manuscript of Samuel reads, “Jonathan the son of Shammah the Hararite.”

33. *Sharar.* Or, “Sacar” (1 Chron. 11:35).

34. *Eliphelet the son of Ahasbai.* For this phrase Chronicles reads, “Eliphal the son of Ur, Hephher the Mecherathite” (1 Chron. 11:35, 36), thus listing two heroes instead of one.

Eliam. 1 Chron. 11:36 omits Eliam, but adds the name of another individual, “Ahijah the Pelonite.” It is of interest to know that among David’s heroes was the son of his famous counselor, Ahithophel (see 2 Sam. 15:31; 16:23).

35. *Hezrai.* Or “Hezro” (1 Chron. 11:37). Most of David’s heroes were from his home districts. Carmel, the modern *Kermel*, was a town 7 1/4 mi. (11.6 km.) south by east from Hebron.

Paarai the Arbite. Probably the same as “Naarai the son of Ezbai” (1 Chron. 11:37).

36. *Igal the son of Nathan.* Probably the same as “Joel the brother of Nathan” (1 Chron. 11:38).

Bani the Gadite. Probably the same as “Mibhar the son of Haggeri” (1 Chron. 11:38).

37. *Zelek the Ammonite.* David had a number of foreigners of distinction in his service, among them “Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah,” a Syrian (v. 36; cf. ch. 8:3, 5, 12); “Ittai the Gittite” (ch. 15:18, 19) from the Philistine city of Gath; and “Uriah the Hittite” (v. 39). Possibly all of them accepted the Hebrew religion.

Nahari. Or “Naharai” (1 Chron. 11:39). He was probably the chief of Joab’s ten armor-bearers (2 Sam. 18:15), or perhaps Joab’s sole armor-bearer earlier.

38. *Ira an Ithrite.* Apparently the same as the Ira who was one of the chief rulers of David (ch. 20:26).

Gareb an Ithrite. The Ithrites were families from the neighborhood of Kirjath-jearim (1 Chron. 2:53), a village about 8 mi. (13 km.) west by north from Jerusalem, where the ark was placed after being sent back to Beth-shemesh by the Philistines who had captured it (1 Sam. 7:1, 2).

39. *Uriah the Hittite.* See ch. 11. After the name of Uriah, 16 heroes are listed in 1 Chron. 11:41–47 whose names are not found elsewhere in the Bible.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–5PP 754

3, 4 PK 26

4 DA 103; PK 688

13–17PP 736

15–175T 43

CHAPTER 24

1 *David, tempted by Satan, forceth Joab to number the people.* 5 *The captains, in nine months and twenty days, bring the muster of thirteen hundred thousand fighting men.* 10 *David, having three plagues propounded by Gad, repenteth, and chooseth the three days’ pestilence.* 15 *After the death of threescore and ten thousand, David by repentance preventeth the destruction of Jerusalem.* 18 *David, by Gad’s direction, purchaseth Araunah’s threshingfloor; where having sacrificed, the plague stayeth.*

1. Was kindled. The cause of the displeasure is here not given. The context suggests that the source may have been the increased pride and self-confidence of Israel that resulted from the newly attained national greatness. Ambition for worldly greatness and a desire to be like the nations round about had arisen, and with it had come a decreasing sense of the solemn destiny to which the nation had been called.

He moved. That is, the Lord did so. The parallel account says, “And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (1 Chron. 21:1). These statements are not necessarily contradictory but may simply represent two aspects of the same incident. In the verse under consideration we have another instance where God is said to do that which He does not prevent (see PP 728, 739). It was actually Satan who instigated the pride and ambition that led Israel’s king to promote procedures to increase the size of his army for the purpose of extending the boundaries of Israel by new military conquests (see PP 747).

Number Israel. There is nothing in the narrative to indicate precisely when in the life of David this incident took place. The fact that Joab was engaged in the work for almost ten months (v. 8) shows that it must have been at a time of freedom from war. In the parallel account (1 Chron. 24:21) the narrative is immediately followed by the record of David’s preparations for the building of the Temple. In both Samuel and Chronicles these preparations are among the last items to be recorded for David’s reign. All this leads to the conclusion that the military census took place toward the end of David’s reign.

2. To Joab. The work was assigned to Joab because he was in command of the army, and the census was for military purposes (see v. 9; PP 747).

From Dan even to Beer-sheba. The phrase is reversed in 1 Chron. 21:2, “From Beer-sheba even to Dan” (see 2 Chron. 30:5). In all the earlier books—in Judges, Samuel, and Kings—the reading is “from Dan even to Beer-sheba” (Judges 20:1; 1 Sam. 3:20; 2 Sam. 3:10; 17:11; 24:2, 15; 1 Kings 4:25). A possible explanation for the reversal is that at the time when Chronicles was written, about the 5th century B.C., the part of the early kingdom uppermost in the Hebrew mind was Judah, for the northern kingdom of Israel had ended two centuries earlier. Since Dan was in the northern kingdom, it would hardly have seemed appropriate to name it before Beersheba. Thus the use of this expression, “from Dan even to Beer-sheba,” is an indication of the early date of the books of Samuel.

3. Why? Joab was a hardened and unscrupulous general, but even he could see that the taking of such a census was out of keeping with the fundamental principles of the Hebrew monarchy. By a number of questions he endeavored to cause David to recognize the folly of his course.

5. They passed over Jordan. These details of the method of taking the census are omitted in Chronicles. Crossing the Jordan, Joab and the captains of the host began the work in the extreme south, at Aroer. This city was on the banks of the river Arnon (Deut. 2:36; Joshua 13:16), on the southern border of Israel’s territory in Transjordan. Its ruins still bear the name ‘Arâ’ir.

Midst of the river. Or, “midst of the wadi” (see Joshua 13:9).

Of Gad. One of the recensions of the LXX reads “toward Gad” or “unto Gad.”

Jazer. A city on the border of Gad (Joshua 13:24, 25).

6. To Gilead. Gilead lay to the southeast of the Sea of Galilee and included Gad and Manasseh.

Tahtim-hodshi. Nothing is known of this land and nothing whatsoever can be made of this name. One of the recensions of the LXX reads “Kadesh in the land of the Hittites.”

Dan-jaan. This is the only place where the name “Dan” appears with the suffix “jaan.” There is no question that “Dan” is meant, since it is twice referred to (vs. 2, 15) and since at this point in the description a place at the extreme northern limit, in the vicinity of Sidon, would be in order (see Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:27–29).

Zidon. Although Sidon was nominally within the tribe of Asher, it does not appear ever to have been possessed by the Asherites (Judges 1:31, 32).

7. The strong hold of Tyre. They came to some strong place on the Phoenician boundary in the vicinity of Tyre, although they did not come to the city itself. Tyre was at this time an independent state whose ruler, Hiram, was a friend of both David (2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Chron. 14:1) and Solomon (1 Kings 5:1).

The Hivites. It appears that the remnants of these ancient inhabitants of the land (Deut. 7:1; Judges 3:5) still occupied portions on the borders of Israel.

To Beer-sheba. No details are given of the places visited in the taking of the census in the main parts of Israel and Judah.

8. Nine months and twenty days. This exact detail reflects the reliability of the record. The fact that so long a time was taken indicates the fact that careful work must have been done.

9. Gave up the sum. The figures given here differ from those in 1 Chron. 21:5. Some believe that the total assigned to Israel in Chronicles may have included the standing army of 288,000 men (1 Chron. 27:1–15). Others take this total to include estimates of the tribes of Levi and Benjamin, whose census was not taken (1 Chron. 21:6). Perhaps a distinction can be found between the “valiant men” here designated and the “all they of Israel” in 1 Chron. 21:5 by regarding the former group as troops eligible for active duty, and the latter as including, in addition, reserve units. In any case the figures as given are obviously round numbers.

10. I have sinned greatly. As the census was under way, David began to think over the implications of what he had done and to realize that he was making a mistake. It was the Spirit of God that spoke to him and showed him the folly of his course. In deep humility he confessed his mistake before God and asked for forgiveness.

13. Seven years. The LXX reads “three years,” as does the parallel passage, 1 Chron. 21:12.

14. The hand of the Lord. David does not here seem to have made an absolute choice as to exactly what his judgment should be, only that it should come from God. Either the pestilence or the famine might be regarded as coming directly from the Lord. Both judgments would fall upon the nation as much as upon the king, but inasmuch as the people cherished the same sins as those that prompted David’s action, the Lord through David’s error punished the sins of Israel (see PP 748).

15. To the time appointed. The three days specified (v. 13).

16. The Lord repented. See on Gen. 6:6, Ex. 32:14.

Araunah. Or “Ornan” (1 Chron. 21:15).

17. Lo, I have sinned. David frankly confessed his sin. There was no attempt to cast the blame on anyone else. He was the one who was primarily responsible, and this responsibility he acknowledged before God.

18. Rear an altar. The spot where the angel halted was on Mt. Moriah, the mountain where Abraham had erected an altar for the offering of Isaac and where God had appeared unto him (Gen. 22:1–14; 2 Chron. 3:1), and it was here that Solomon later erected his temple. The place where death had been stayed by mercy was holy ground and was henceforth recognized as such by God’s people (see PP 748, 749).

23. As a king. This passage should read: “All these things, O king, does Araunah give unto the king.” As soon as Araunah knew that David desired the threshing floor for an altar he was willing to give it to him, together with the oxen and threshing instruments. He was willing to make his own personal sacrifice in order that the plague might be stayed.

24. I will surely buy it. It was only right that David should purchase the threshing floor for money and not accept it as a gift. The principle on which David acted underlies all true service and sacrifice.

Fifty shekels of silver. Chronicles gives the price as “six hundred shekels of gold” (1 Chron. 21:25). It may be that the record in Samuel deals with the price paid for only one part of the purchase. David paid 50 shekels (570 gm., or 1 1/4 lb.) of silver for the “threshing floor and the oxen.” Chronicles states that he bought “the place” for 600 shekels (6.84 kg., or 15 lb.). “The place” may mean the entire hill of Moriah on which the Temple was later to be built.

25. Offered burnt offerings. Burnt offerings at this time were offered at Gibeon where the Mosaic tabernacle then was located (1 Chron. 16:39, 40; 21:29; 2 Chron. 1:3–6). 1 Chron. 21:26 states that when these offerings were offered, the Lord “answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.” David settled upon this site as the place for the house of the Lord (1 Chron. 21:1; 2 Chron. 3:1).

With this account of David’s repentance and reconciliation to God the book of Samuel closes. David’s life is a constant testimony to the goodness and mercy of God and to the power of His saving grace in the experiences of those who earnestly and humbly give their lives to Him.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1–25PP 747–749

1–13PP 747

14 TM 354; 5T 57

14–25PP 748

24 2T 127

6

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (2 Sa 23:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.